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SIX

SERMONS,

ON SOME OF THE

Most important Doctrines of Christianity;

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

FIVE SERMONS,

ON

OCCASIONAL SUBJECTS,

BY

REV. A. FRESTON, A. M.

RECTOR OF EDGWORTH, GLOUCESTERSHIRE.

"Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the Scrip-
"tures, neither the Power of God?"—Mark xii. 24.

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SPENCER PERCEVAL, M. P.

Chancellor of the Exchequer, &c. &c. &c.

SIR,

THE benevolent Attention you have paid to the Melioration of the state of the inferior Clergy, will, I hope, induce you to receive the Dedication of this small Volume, as a Mark of Gratitude and Respect. The Time, I trust, is not far distant, when, chiefly by your persevering and humane Exertions, every Parish will be enabled fairly

to expect and require its appropriate resident Clergyman. The total absence of Laymen from their Estates, is a great Injury to Society, but the Non-residence of any established Ecclesiastic, either Rector, Vicar, or Curate, is an Evil attended with the worst Consequences to the Interests of Religion and Morality.

I have the Honor to be,

SIR,

Your obedient Servant,

A. FRESTON.

Edgworth, June 3, 1809.

TO THE READER.

THE Author begs leave to apologize for printing the few Greek Notes that occur in these Sermons, in the Roman Character. He has experienced, upon former Occasions, so much Delay, and so many Mistakes in the Greek Type, that he hopes it will be excused upon the present. The chief Object, is to give the Authority for an Assertion; and to the Learned, he hopes, this will be done as well by the Method now resorted to, as by the other, which it certainly gave him great concern not to adopt.

ERRATA.

Page 54, Note, for *genetive* read *genitive*
Page 80, line 18, for *whenever* read *when.*
Page 81, line 7, for *amelioration* read *melioration.*
Page 118, line 9, for *merey*, read *mercy*; line 13, for *conduct* read *conduct*
Page 136, line 13, dele *that.*
Page 137, line 5, dele *he.*
Page 138, line 18, for *effect* read *effect.*
Page 143, line 3, for *the* read *his.*
Page 157, line 15, for *shall* read *shalt.*
Page 183, head line, for *edcaution*, read *education.*
Page 192, line 16, for *thc* read *the.*
Page 212, line 6, for *man* read *men.*
Page 220, line 21, for *Commannment* read *Commandment.*
Page 246, line 6, dele *but.*

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SERMON I.

INTRODUCTORY.

I CORINTH. XV. 22.

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

IN the first chapter of the Book of Genesis, we read, "that God created man in his "own image, in the image of God created "he him:" by which we are to understand, not any corporeal, but a spiritual, or mental resemblance. God is a spirit; of this the mind of man is enabled to form but an inadequate idea; of this he can only judge by its energies and operations. We are expressly forbidden, by the law of our Creator, to make any personal representation of our God: he is not the object of our fleshly senses, but of our

spiritual soul; when man, therefore, is said to be made in the image of his Maker, he must be understood, as created originally, a just, an upright, and a rational being. But notwithstanding the perfection of man's original mind, it is evidently necessary he must be a free agent: if he had no power of doing wrong, he could have no merit in doing right; he would have been a mere machine; he would have resembled inert matter, which cannot act but as it is acted upon. The Angels were also free agents; "they kept not "their first estate, but left their own habi-"tations"* of bliss and immortality. As the test of man's obedience to his Creator and Sovereign Ruler, he must have some fixed law, by the observance or transgression of which he might stand or fall. A multiplicity of laws was neither possible for an individual, nor necessary. Adultery he could

* St. Jude.

not

not commit; murder would have reduced him to absolute solitude; and robbery has been introduced, by the inordinate desires and the idler wants of social life, to which he was at that time a stranger, and which he had it in his power to satisfy, if he had been so inclined, by the most unbounded gratification. The *one* law, therefore, was simply obedience to his maker. He transgressed this law; he incurred the penalty; he entailed sin and death on himself and his posterity. The experience of ages has convinced us, that the observance of laws must be secured by penalty, and that punishment must follow delinquency; if not, the efficacy of the law is totally destroyed, and the lawgiver despised. We see, every day, before our eyes, that neither the almost certain loss of life, nor the danger of eternal destruction, can deter men from the commission of the most enormous crimes.

Shortly after the fall of man, its pernicious consequences began to be apparent. Adam perceived the full effect of his transgression, in the guilt of one son, and in the death of the other; he felt how bitter death could be, in the loss of Abel. The image of Adam in Cain, was a mind capable of, and inclined to, corruption; and (horrid to relate) the first overt instance of it was, the murder of an amiable brother: Was this the kind of man, can we suppose, that God created? This propensity to what is wrong, which we feel in every one of us, and which we see (unaccountably as we think) in the violent passions, the greediness, the falsity, and the malice even of infants, is denominated *original sin;* it is what St. Paul calls "the law of our "members warring against the law of our "mind;"* it is an impulse to the improper gratification of our sensual appetites and pas-

* Rom. vii. 23.

sions,

sions, contrary to the express command of God, and destructive of the good of society.* In the midst, however, of justice, God remembered mercy: he promised a descendant of the man he had created, who should redeem mankind from the penalty they had incurred, who should teach them the most exalted virtue, and who should exemplify, in his own person, its practicability, and the possibility of the perfection of man. This Redeemer was to be at once an ensample of godly life, and a vicarious sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.

It is supposed, by one learned commentator,† that no carnal sacrifices took place before

* Eti de peri Job outo gegraptai. Job een dicaios kai amemptos, alethinos, theosebees, apekomenos apo panton kakou, all autos eautou kategorôn legei, Oudeis katharos apo rupou oude ei mias eemeras ee Zoec autou.

CLEMENS ROMANUS.

Psalm li. 5, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin hath my mother conceived me.

† Grotius.

the flood: the firstlings of Abel's flock, he thinks, might possibly be the *milk* of that flock, as the Hebrew word signifies either *milk* or *fat;* but others are of a different opinion, and consider animal sacrifices as commanded soon after the fall,* by the Almighty himself, as types of the great sacrifice of his Son; and this, indeed, may best explain the Apostle's observation, that "by faith Abel offered a "more excellent sacrifice than Cain;"† he believed in the redemption. The characters of the two brothers are properly discriminated in Scripture: Abel was humble, pious, and submissive to his Maker; Cain was sullen, discontented, and malicious. After the deluge, mention is made of Noah's sacrifice; with which the Lord, to speak after the man-

* One learned writer supposes that the skins with which the Almighty cloathed our first parents, were those of the sacrifices, as it was unlikely that any animals should die so soon, or that Adam should kill them for his own use.

† St. Paul. Heb. xi. 4.

ner

ner of men, is said to be delighted.* The patriarch Abraham must have been extremely astonished, to receive from God a clear command to offer up a human sacrifice: and it is impossible he could reconcile this with the promises of God, except by a firm persuasion of the resurrection of the dead. Accordingly the Apostle tells us, that "by "faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received "the promises, offered up his only begotten "son, of whom it was said, that in Isaac "shall thy seed be called; accounting that "God was able even to raise him up from "the dead."†

* No doubt, I think, could be formed that sacrifices were of divine appointment; man, in his savage state, would have been led, by natural instinct, to have eaten the victim, rather than to have consumed it in the fire to his God. This must surely have been the effect of revelation.—See more on sacrifices in Sermon vi.

† Heb. xi. 17.

And his holy prophet had before declared, "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-"offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the "voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is "better than sacrifice, and to hearken than "the fat of rams." †

I could wish next to point out a few of those Jewish sacrifices and ceremonies, which bear a reference to the great sacrifice and oblation of Christ. The lamb chosen for such purposes, was, as an eminent type of our Saviour, to be without spot or blemish; the body of the victim was to be burnt without the camp, as Jesus suffered without the gate. The author of the epistle to the Hebrews, has clearly shewn the resemblance, not only of the sacrifices themselves, to Christ, but even that of the high priest: "Into the "second tabernacle went the high priest, "*alone*, *once* every year, not without blood, "which

† 1 Sam. xv. 22.

" which he offered for himself, and for the " errors of the people. The Holy Ghost " this signifying, that the way into the " holiest of all was not yet made manifest, " while as the first tabernacle was yet stand- " ing, which was a figure *for the time then* " *present*, in which were offered both gifts " and sacrifices, that could not make him that " did the service perfect, as pertaining to " the conscience, which stood only in meats, " and drinks, and divers washings, and " carnal ordinances, imposed on them, until " *the time of reformation.* But Christ being " come an high priest of good things to " come, by a greater and more perfect ta- " bernacle, not made with hands, that is to " say, not of this building, (not of this " lower creation), neither by the blood of " goats and calves, but by his own blood, he " entered in *once* into the holy place, having " obtained eternal redemption for us; for if

" the

" the blood of bulls and of goats, and the
" ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean,
" sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh,
" how much more shall the blood of Christ,
" who, through the eternal spirit, offered
" himself without spot to God, purge your
" conscience from dead works to serve the
" living God? And almost all things are by
" the law purged with blood; and without
" shedding of blood, there is no remission.
" It was therefore necessary, that the pat-
" terns of things in the Heavens should be
" purified with these; but the heavenly
" things themselves, with better sacrifices
" than these; for Christ is not entered into
" the holy places made with hands, which
" are the *figures* of the true, but into
" Heaven itself, now to appear in the pre-
" sence of God for us; nor yet that he
" should offer himself *often*, as the high
" priest entereth into the holy place every
" year,

"year, with the blood of *others*, for then "must he often have suffered since the "foundation of the world: but now *once* in "the end of the world, hath he *appeared*, "to put away sin by the sacrifice of him-"self."* Undoubtedly all the Jewish sacrifices were types of Christ, and none more so than the Passover. God struck the *first-born* son in every family, to signify before hand the death of his only begotten and beloved son, the heir of all things, who is called the *first-born* of God and of his mother:† the whole assembly of the congregation were to kill the paschal lamb, as the whole Jewish Sanhedrim, nay the whole body of the Jewish people, condemned our Saviour to death. Nothing of it was to remain until the morning; so the Jews "besought Pilate, "that his body should not remain on the

* St. Paul, Heb. ix.

† Matt. 1. 25.—Luke ii. 7.—Heb. l. 6.

"Cross

"Cross till the morrow, but that his legs "might be broken, and that he might be "taken away." * But the divine prophecy had declared "not a bone of him shall be "broken," as the divine injunction had forbidden the Jews to break a bone of the Lord's passover.

The brazen serpent was also another type of Christ; for our Saviour says, "As Moses "lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, "even so must the son of man be lifted up, "that whosoever believeth in him should "not perish, but have eternal life." † Now it is hardly to be supposed, that God would have made that very animal which was the cause of disease, at once the means of cure; or, knowing how prone the Jews were to idolatry, would have encouraged them to look up with hope and confidence to a sensible and material object, without further

* John xix. 31. † John iii. 14, 15.

explanation.

explanation.* No doubt Moses did explain to them the intent of such a procedure. The author of the book of Wisdom, addressing himself to God, and speaking of the Israelites, has imputed the virtue of this brazen serpent to its true cause: "He that "turned himself towards it, was not healed "by the thing which he saw, but by thee, "who art the Saviour of all."† And accordingly in the foregoing verse he calls it a "sign or symbol of salvation, to put them "in remembrance of the commandment of "the law." The Jewish Doctors could never account for this transaction, nor imagine how God, who had forbidden all manner of graven images, should command one

* Accordingly we do find, that after the Jews had relapsed into idolatry, seven hundred and thirty one years after Moses, they worshipped the brazen serpent. Hezekiah endeavoured to convince them of their extreme folly, breaking it to pieces, and assuring them, that it was nothing but *Nehushtan, a trumpery thing of brass.*

† Wisdom xvi. 7.

to

to be used on this occasion.* But had they known Christ, and him crucified, they might have soon perceived, that God intended it for a type of the death of his son, and of the very manner in which he was to die; and that the effects of the brazen Serpent upon the Israelites, who looked upon it, did represent the virtue received by true believers, from the death of their Saviour and Redeemer, aud the cure they experienced of that evil, brought upon them by the malice of Satan, prefigured in the Old Testament under the form of a serpent. Our Saviour says, "and I, if I be lifted "up from the earth, will draw all men "unto me. This he said, signifying what "death he should die:"† and this prophecy was the more remarkable, because, in two former instances, the Jews had

* Vid. Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho.

† John xii. 32.

attempted

attempted to stone him to death; and Stephen they actually did stone, for what they esteemed the same offence.

Another remarkable type of the Messiah, was that of the prophet Jonah: Christ says, "An evil and adulterous generation seek-"eth after a sign; but there shall no sign "be given to it, but the sign of the prophet "Jonas; for as Jonas was three days and "three nights in the whale's belly, so shall "the Son of Man be three days and three "nights in the heart of the earth."* He calls them an adulterous generation, because they had apostatized from the true religion, as an unfaithful wife deserts her legitimate husband, and diverts her attachment to a stranger. The prophecies of the Old Testament are strictly fulfilled in the New; that is, in the time and circumstances of our Saviour's coming, his birth, course of life,

* Matt. xii. 39.

doctrine, actions, sufferings, death, and resurrection. We may safely rely on the genuineness and authenticity of the New Testament, since, if it had been corrupted, the corrupters must have been Jews; and it can hardly be supposed, that the Jews would have left such testimonies against themselves; such a record of miracles unbelieved, and unattended to; the very names of persons mentioned, on whom these miracles were performed, as for instance, blind Bartimeus the son of Timæus, Ananias and Sapphira, Elymas the sorcerer, Malchus, and many others.

That some errors may have crept into both the Hebrew and Greek copies of the Bible, is possible; but a learned author* has shewn, that in the quotations of the New Testament from the prophecies of the Old, in *nine* instances out of *ten*, the very words

* Dr. Owen.

of

of the ancient scriptures are made use of; and in all the rest, the sense of the prophecy is taken at least, if not the very words. It is not my intention, in the present sermon, to enter fully into the different prophecies respecting our Saviour, because they must necessarily be referred to, in their order, in the subsequent discourses, and under their proper heads; and some difficulty will certainly arise, to keep them distinct and to avoid repetition. Our Saviour advises his followers, to search the Scriptures; for in them, says he, ye are wisely of opinion ye have the precepts of eternal life laid down, "and they "are they which testify of me."* In like manner the Church to which we belong, exhorts us diligently to read, mark, and learn them; the better we are informed of them, the more firm our faith will be, and it is our own fault, if not the more pure our

* John v. 29.

morals. It is, however, too much (unhappily) the custom of the present day, to set up the pride of human reason against the express word of God; to sit down to read the Scriptures, not with a view to reconcile difficulties, and to satisfy our minds upon them, by diligent research, but to find them out and cavil at them, and to maintain our own crude and hasty judgment, against the well digested opinions of learned and pious men. "The great vice of the present day, "(says a very able writer*) is a presumptuous precipitancy of judgment; and there "is nothing from which the cause of Christianity, as well as of general knowledge, "has suffered more severely, than from that "impatience of investigation, and that confidence of decision upon hasty and partial "views, which mark the literary character "of an age, undeservedly extolled for its

* Magee.

"improvements,

"improvements in reasoning and philoso-
"phy." This is not becoming the humility of Christians in sacred researches. If we enter at all upon the subject, let us, by long study and application, endeavour to make ourselves masters of it; but if our inclinations or occupations have led us another way, it is, surely, the greatest want of candour and modesty, to refuse attention to those, who, from careful investigation, and long reflection, are not likely to misunderstand it, and who can have no motive to mislead us.

It is most unfairly urged against the members of the Church of England, that they only support, and endeavour to advance the tenets of that Church, to promote their own emolument and secular interests; that, like the Ephesian artificers, they cry out, because they think "that their craft is in "danger to be set at nought;" for is it not continually found, that men who wish no

further promotion, are the most zealous in the defence and advancement of its doctrines, from the highly laudable principle of discharging an incumbent duty to their Lord and Saviour, and to all mankind?

Lastly, Christ declares, that "He is not "come to destroy the law and the pro-"phets; he came not to destroy, but to "fulfil." The moral law of Moses is clearly of everlasting obligation; the comprehension of our duty to God and man, must ever remain the same; "Thou shalt "love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, "with all thy mind, and with all thy "strength, and thy neighbour as thyself," is a sufficient summary of the Mosaic law, at once concise and comprehensive; as our Saviour says, "on these two command-"ments hang all the law and the pro-"phets." The whole of the Old Testament endeavours strongly to inculcate these two grand

grand duties of man, the New Testament to enforce and to extend them. But with respect to the law of sacrifices, Christ has fulfilled that, and rendered them no longer necessary; "For this man, after he had of-" fered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat " down on the right hand of God."

SERMON II.

WHO THAT REDEEMER WAS; GOD, AND THE SON OF GOD.

JOHN I. XIV.

And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.

HAVING briefly noticed, in my first discourse, some promises and types of a Redeemer, I shall, secondly, proceed to enquire, who that Redeemer was? The pre-existence, and super-angelic nature of Jesus Christ, are so often alluded to by himself and others, and have been so clearly proved by many able writers, that all dispute on these points, seems to be given up: but the Godhead of Christ, and his being, in a peculiar and exclusive manner, the proper

proper and only Son of God, is still doubted by some, even after all that has been urged by the ancient fathers, and by the most learned commentators, from the time of Cerinthus to the present era. All sects, however, seem to agree, that the Scriptures alone must decide this point; but the misfortune is, that almost every one, in the present day, claims the right of interpreting and explaining Scripture according to his own ideas, and as he himself understands it, now figuratively, now literally: he first forms his hypothesis, then wrests the translation of the original to it; so that each sect maintains that its tenets are built on the basis of holy writ. By far the greater part, however, of Christian societies, acknowledge the divinity of Christ. There is, certainly, one sect that denies it, and denominates itself Unitarian, and attempts unfairly to stigmatize the others with the charge of Tritheism, than which

accusation

accusation nothing can be more unfounded. With much greater reason might the Trinitarian apply the title of Deists to those who disbelieve the Godhead of our Saviour. The unity of God, is a doctrine maintained by many in the heathen world, by the Mosaic tables, by the Jews, and even by the Mohammedans, by all Christians, and not less by the Church of England. Another groundless accusation against us seems to be, that we do not allow the proper humanity of Jesus Christ; but how can this be justly said, when we uniformly assert him to be "*perfect man*, of a "reasonable soul, and *human flesh* sub-"sisting?" that he was "incarnate by the "Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and "was made *man*." In our Communion service we confess him to be "*both God* "*and man*," and "*very man*," as also in several places of our Liturgy. It shall be my endeavour, in this discourse, there-

fore,

fore, as far as lies in my power, to satisfy the enquiries of my hearers on this most essential point of our faith, and to prove, from Scripture, that our Church is justified in maintaining, first, that Christ is God; and, secondly, that he is peculiarly, and solely, the Son of God. The matter is truly important, and ought to be closely and calmly argued; we do not want to revile, or to persecute, but to convince; at the same time I must be supposed addressing myself to those who believe the Scriptures. To follow the examination of the New Testament, as it is called, in regular order, let us begin with the 1st chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel,* where we

* I cannot see any reason to call the authenticity of the 1st chapter of St. Matthew in question, after the pains taken by Mill, Wetstein, and others, to ascertain it. As to saying that the latter part contradicts the genealogy, that I most strenuously deny. The Evangelist begins by saying, "Abraham begat Isaac," &c. and goes on till he comes to Joseph,

we find the history of our Saviour's birth to be, that when his mother was espoused to Joseph, before they lived together as man and wife, he was greatly surprised and chagrined to find her pregnant, knowing that the Child could not be his, yet, being an humane and benevolent man, he had compassion on her supposed frailty, did not wish to expose her to public scorn,

Joseph, when he changes the expression, and instead of saying, "Jacob begat Joseph, and Joseph begat Jesus, who is "called the Christ," he says, "Jacob begat Joseph, the "husband of *Mary*, *of whom* was born Jesus," thereby clearly intimating that Jesus was not the son of Joseph, though he was of Mary: this being the case, how did it happen? why as we are told in the subsequent part of the chapter, "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was in this man-"ner:" &c. If Jesus was the Son of Joseph's wife, without any protest or objection on the part of the husband, he was by law entitled to the crown of David, or to all the rights and promises to which Joseph was entitled, but he was not to be descended in the flesh from Joseph, for the prophecy says (Gen. iii. 15), it was the "seed of the woman which should bruise the serpent's head." As to the Jews calling our Saviour "The Carpenter's Son," he was not a whit the more so for that.

but

but to divorce her privately, and leave her conduct to be her punishment. Whilst he was reflecting on the painful step he had to take, the doubts, and uneasiness of his mind were all removed by a heavenly vision, informing him, that God had chosen to introduce Jehovah the Saviour (for such is the meaning of the word in the Hebrew language) into the world, through the corporeal substance of his wife, so pure a virgin both in thought and deed, that she could urge before the face of an Angel her unspotted chastity. This Child, said the messenger to Joseph, shall be called Jesus, in a higher sense than any others who have gone before him, because "he "shall save *his* people from *their sins*." The scruples of Joseph were overcome; he knew that "with God all things are pos- "sible;" he waited with pious submission "till God should be with us."

As

As we have set out with believing the Scriptures as the basis of all argument, let us briefly review this story, and we must acknowledge, if it be true, that this Jesus never could be the son of Joseph: his mother was pregnant of him before her marriage; and another Evangelist tells us he *knew* her not,* till she brought forth her first born Son. What then is the inference to be drawn from it? even that which St. Luke asserts to be the truth: "The "holy spirit shall come upon thee Mary, "and the power of the Highest shall over-"shadow thee, therefore also, that holy thing "that shall be born of thee, shall be called "(is) the Son of God. He shall be great, "and shall be called the Son of the Highest, "thou shalt call his name Jesus, because,

*Luke i. 34. As to rejecting this chapter upon mere supposition, "though it is found in all the copies now "extant," it is the most unwarrantable attempt I ever read of.

"as

"as the Prophet of old declared, he is Im-
"manuel,* that is *God with us.*" The second passage to be noticed, is that question of our Saviour to the Jews, contained in the 22d chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, "What think ye of Christ, whose son
"is he? they say unto him, The son of
"David. He saith unto them, How then
"doth David in spirit call him Lord? saying, in the 110th Psalm, The Lord said
"unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,
"till I make thine enemies thy foot-stool.
"If David then call him Lord, how is he
"then his son?"

Now first let us remark, that this was undoubtedly a quotation from a psalm *written by David*, and that it clearly al-

* An attempt has lately been made to apply this prophecy to Hezechiah; but let any man read the 2d verse of the 16th chapter of the 2d book of Kings, and compare it with the 2d verse of the 18th chapter of the 2d book of Kings, and he will find it impossible; for Hezechiah must be *nine* years old when the prophecy was uttered.

luded

luded to the Messiah; otherwise the Jews would have denied the quotation, as having been composed by some one else, or as having no reference at all to the Messiah. Next, the word *Lord* does most commonly signify God, is frequently applied by the Jews to the Supreme Being, and is a translation of the word Jehovah; as, for instance, "Then the *Lord* rained upon So-"dom and Gomorrhah fire and brimstone "from the *Lord* out of heaven," where both these words are Jehovah in the Hebrew, and so the word is rendered four or five times in the same chapter. And this passage is further elucidated by St. Peter, in the Acts of the Apostles, ii. 34, "For David is not as-"cended into the heavens; but he saith "himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, "Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thy "foes thy footstool." The declarations of St. John, in the 1st chapter of his Gospel, respecting

respecting the eternity of the word, and of his being absolutely God, have been, and are so often made use of, in proof of what we are here asserting, that it is hardly necessary to repeat them; they are irrefragable, and their genuineness and authenticity have never been called in question.*

The words of the text are surely a downright proof of the incarnation; for, after declaring that this Word was *God*, the Evangelist tells us, "That he became flesh, "and took up his abode amongst us, and "we beheld *his glory*, the glory as of the "only begotten of the Father, full of grace "and truth." In the 3d chapter of the same Evangelist, and at the 13th verse, our Saviour speaks of himself, as having at some time or other "ascended into

* An attempt, however, is made, to render ὁ Logos, *the* Word; and Theos, *a* God.

" Heaven, as being in Heaven, and as " having come down from Heaven." If our Saviour possessed proper humanity without any divinity, what he here says could not be true, for he affirms, " That " no man hath ascended up into Heaven; " and yet he says except the Son of Man, " who descended or came down from Hea- " ven, and who still more is in Heaven." That the Son of Man means the Messiah or Christ, is evident, both from Daniel, and from the very next verse of this chapter, where Jesus alludes to his own Crucifixion; and we have no account in the Evangelists, that the body of Christ ascended up into Heaven, till after that Crucifixion. " He says to the woman, " Touch me not, I am not yet ascended " to my Father." How then the Son of man could be in Heaven, or have come

down

down from Heaven, without being both spiritual and pre-existent, I cannot conceive. In other places he says, "That he "came down from Heaven, not to do his "own will, but the will of him who sent "him." Again, "I am the living bread "which came down from Heaven." In the same 3d chapter of St. John, John the Baptist (who is elsewhere assured "that "he shall be called the Prophet of the "Highest, and that he shall go before the "face of the Lord Jehovah, to prepare *his* "ways") declares, that he was sent before him, that was with him beyond Jordan, to whom he bore witness, and of whom he infers, "That he came from above (from "Heaven,) and that he is above all." "He "that cometh after me is preferred before "me, for he *was* before me;" an unanswerable proof of the pre-existence of Christ. Those assertions of our Saviour, "That the

"Son can do nothing of himself but what "he *seeth* the Father do;" "That what-"soever things the Father doeth, these also "doeth the Son likewise;" "That he speaks "that he hath *seen* with the Father;" "That in his Father's house are many "mansions;" "That as the Father raiseth "up the dead, and quickeneth whom he "will, even so doth the Son, and quick-"eneth whom *he* will;" "That all men "should honour the Son even as they honour "the Father;" "That he will come in "company with his Father, and make his "abode with the righteous man;" "That "where two or three are gathered together, "he is in the midst of them;" "That "all things that the Father hath are his, "and therefore that the Holy Spirit shall "receive of his, and shall shew it to his "Disciples;" are expressions too strong for a mere man to utter. God says to Moses, "That

"That no man can see God, and live;" yet God is said to have appeared to Abraham and to Hagar. In like manner our Saviour says, "No man hath seen God at "any time, the only begotten Son who is "in the bosom of the Father, he hath "declared him;" and yet this same person says of the Jews, "If I had not done "among them the works which none other "man did, they had not had sin; but "now they have both *seen* and hated, both "me and my Father; for he that hateth "*me*, hateth my Father also; and he that "hath seen *me*, hath seen the Father also." As the Almighty had declared to Moses, when he sent him to deliver the children of Israel out of Egypt, "*I am* that *I am*," so our Saviour solemnly affirms of himself, that he not only existed before Abraham, but that he is the ever present and eternal existence "*I am*;" for such it must be

rendered here, or it will not agree with the context, "Thou art not yet fifty years "old, and hast thou seen Abraham? And "Jesus said, Verily, verily I say unto "you, before Abraham *was*, I *am*."

The next passage to be mentioned, is that in which our Saviour says, "That he "gives unto his faithful followers eternal "life: my Father which gave them me "is greater than all, and none is able to "pluck them out of my Father's hand." "I and the Father are one," therefore no one is able to pluck them out of my hand. This I conceive is the natural inference to be drawn from the sentence, and were I to attempt to put upon this passage any figurative construction, I could not do it. I understand it literally; did the hearers? yes; they took up stones to cast at him, "because, being a man, he made himself "God." Did the meek Teacher undeceive them

them, and explain his words in a different manner? Did he say, you have mistaken my meaning, I have not the presumption to say, I and the Father *are one and the same God?* but so far from doing this, he justifies his expression, he declares that he is *the Son of God;* and he wishes them to know and believe that he is in the Father, and the Father in him. If this was not a confirmation of his former assertion, why should the Jews seek again to apprehend him, or he to escape out of their hands? The Evangelist St. John informs us, that Christ breathed on his Disciples, and conferred on them the Holy Spirit: this was elsewhere said to proceed from the Father, and to be called the *Comforter;* but St. Peter tells us, in his epistles, that the prophets of old were inspired by *the Spirit of Christ:* How could these prophets be inspired by the spirit of a person not in

existence, or how could they be inspired by any other Spirit than the Spirit of God, as we are repeatedly assured by these holy men themselves? The incredulity of St. Thomas procured him, from his most merciful and indulgent Master, ocular demonstration of his corporeal existence after death: the expression, "My Lord, and my God," was not an exclamation of surprize, such were not common among the Jews, neither made use of in their speech, nor appropriate to the times; it was an acknowledgement of his Lord's Divinity, which our Saviour did not disclaim; he approved rather than repressed the fervor of his expression. How natural it would have been for a pious man to have said, "Thomas, I am indeed "thy Lord and Master, risen from the dead, "a great prophet, and a divine teacher, sent "into the world by the immediate appoint-"ment of the Almighty, but *I am not thy* "*God.*"

"*God.*" Christ repeatedly told his Disciples, that he came down from Heaven into this world, that he should leave this world, and return unto the Father, God Almighty, and that he "had a glory with this Supreme "Being before the world was." Such are some of the testimonies of those who were personally acquainted with Christ upon earth, whose lives were virtuous, humble, and disinterested; whose writings are void of vanity, superstition, credulity and enthusiasm; who spake forth the words of truth and soundness of mind; and who sealed their declarations with their blood.

The other Apostles give additional testimony to the divinity of our Lord, especially St. Paul, whose conversion from a persecutor, to become one of the persecuted, cannot but have the greatest weight, and be deemed most extraordinary and miraculous. He calls our Saviour "The Lord

"from

"from Heaven." He declares that in "him dwells *all* the fullness of the God-"head bodily.* That as he was in the "form of God, he thought it not robbery "to be equal with God;" it was no assumption of another's dignity and prerogative, but his own clear and unquestionable right. It is true, also, at the same time, "that he made himself of no repu-"tation," but took upon him the form of a servant, "and being found in *fashion* "*as a man*," he suffered the ignominious death of a malefactor, despising the disgrace of crucifixion. We must acknowledge, that the Godhead of Christ is maintained in the New Testament, or utterly pervert the common construction of language.

Let us now proceed to the second head, and endeavour to shew that Christ is the Son of God. I grant that in all

* Somaticôs, corporeo modo; substantially, really, and personally.

nations

nations and times of the world, God has been addressed in prayer, as the All-beneficent, and Almighty Father of mankind; that in the Scriptures both of the Old and New Testament, men are called the *sons* and the *children* of God; but who but Christ was ever called, "The only be-" gotten and beloved Son of God?"* But his peculiar and exclusive filiation will be seen in the following passages: "That no " man knoweth the Father, the Lord of " Heaven and earth, save the Son, and " he to whomsoever the Son will reveal " him;" and more, "That no man know-" eth this Son, but the Father." These words evidently declare, that there is something inexplicably mysterious in the nature

* I should be extremely obliged to any translator to tell me where he finds authority for rendering *monogenees adopted*, or *gennao* to *adopt*, because in all the instances I have ever seen, when applied to a man, it signifies to *beget*, or be the father of; to a woman, to bring forth a child, or to be the mother of.

and

their rejection and murder of the Son of God; of the destruction of their Church and Government; and of the calling in, and the conversion of the Gentiles; and of their admission to all those privileges, which God had so peculiarly, in former times, vouchsafed to the people of Israel. The Apostle seems to allude to this parable, when he says, "God, who, at sundry times, "and in divers manners, spake in times "past unto the fathers by the prophets, "hath, in these last days, spoken unto us "*by his Son*, whom he hath appointed "heir of all things, by whom also he made "the worlds,* who being the brightness

* *Dia* with a genetive case, in six hundred places of the New Testament, signifies *by* whom. That our Saviour is the creator of the world, is evident from the 10th verse of the same chapter, also from the 1st of St. John's Gospel, verse 3, where, to strengthen the expression, it is said, "Without him was not any thing made that was "made." Vide also St. John 1. 10, and Ephes. iii. 9.

"of

"of his glory, and the express image of "his person, and upholding all things by "the word of his power, when he had by "himself purged our sins, sat down on the "right hand of the Majesty on High, "being made so much better than the "Angels, as he hath by *inheritance* ob- "tained a more excellent name than they; "for unto which of the Angels said he "at any time, *Thou art my Son*, this day "have I begotten thee." And again, "I "will be to him a Father, and he shall "be to me a Son." And again, when he *bringeth in* the first begotten *into the world*, he saith, "Let all the Angels of "God worship him, (or as is elsewhere "said, *bow the knee to him*, that is adore "him.)" And of the Angels he saith, "Who maketh his Angels spirits, and his "Ministers a flame of fire;" but to the Son he saith, "Thy Throne, O God, is

"for

"for ever and ever,* thou hast loved "righteousness and hated iniquity, where- "fore, O God, thy God hath anointed "thee with the oil of gladness above thy "fellows." Again, the Psalmist says of

* "Thy Throne, O God, is for ever and ever." This is a quotation from the 45th Psalm. The Latin Vulgate translates it "Solium tuum ô Deus." The Italic version, "Il tuo Seggio, ô Dio;" but perhaps it might be said, this is copied from the Latin; that cannot be, because, in the next verse, where the Latin reads "ô deus," the Italian is "lo Dio." The French also is "Ton Trone ô "Dieu." The *ô Theos* of the Septuagint is an attic vocative case, and the only word used as a vocative case by them in the whole book of Psalms. To say that God is the Throne of Christ, is arrant nonsense; God is never called the Throne, Seat, Temple, or Habitation of any man. If we refer to Rev. iii. 21, we find Christ saying, "To him that over- "cometh will I give to sit with me in my Throne, even as "I also overcame, *and am set down* with my Father in his "Throne." Also, Sam. vii. 13, it is said, "God will "establish the Throne of his (David's) Son's kingdom. I "will be his Father, and he shall be my Son. Thy Throne "shall be established for ever." Besides, if the passage had been God is thy Throne, the *O Theos* would have come first; as, for instance, "God is our King," *O Theos Basileus hemôn;* "God is the Judge," *O Theos kritees esti;* "God is our Refuge," "*O Theos hemôn katafugee;*" &c. &c.

him,

him, "O my God, Thou in the beginning "hast laid the foundation of the earth, "and the Heavens are the works of thine "hands." The Jews of old, as well as the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, applied this description to the Messiah, no doubt can therefore be formed, that he was the divine Logos who created the world. St. Paul also says, "That God spared not "his *own Son*, but that when the fulness "of time was come, he sent forth this "Son, *made of a woman*, made under the "law, and that he had put the spirit of "this Son into the hearts of the Galatian "Christians." "God was *manifest* in the "flesh," says the same Apostle. St. John, in his first epistle, calls Jesus Christ the "*True God*, and twice the *Eternal Life* "which was with the Father, and was "*manifested* to us;" and in the next epistle he says, "Grace be with you, mercy and

" peace from God the Father, and from " the Lord Jesus Christ, *the Son of the* " *Father.*" Why should this be so particularly specified, if he were only mere man, the greatest of all the prophets? Moses was a servant, so were all the prophets, but Christ "a Son in his own house;" and " as he that despised Moses' law, died " without mercy, of how much sorer pu- " nishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought " worthy, who hath trodden under foot " the Son of God." It is well worth the while of those who want further conviction on this subject, to review the circumstances of our Saviour's trial and condemnation. He is brought before Pilate, the Roman governor, as accused by the Jews of *some crime.* Pilate naturally asks, " What ac- " cusation bring you against this man?" The Jews are somewhat puzzled to point out the offence; they answer, in a mixt tone

tone of impertinence and displeasure, "If "he were not a malefactor, we would "not have delivered him unto thee." They suborn with difficulty two false witnesses, who affirm, "This fellow has the insolence "to say, Destroy the great temple of "Jerusalem, and in three days I will build "it up again." But though there was folly, presumption, and madness in this speech, it could not be considered a capital offence and worthy of death; they therefore tried still further, to see if they could not get him to convict himself. The high priest adjures him by the living God to tell him, whether he were the true Messiah, the Son of God. He answers, "Thou hast said, and moreover ye shall "see me, the Son of Man, hereafter sitting "on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven, with power "and great glory." This was evidence

enough for Caiaphas, he wanted no further witnesses, he rent his cloaths with indignation, he appealed to the people, they find him guilty of blasphemy, and condemn him to death. They accuse him of sedition, but of this he perfectly clears himself, to the satisfaction of Pilate: "My king-"dom is not of this world, else would my "servants fight, that I should not be de-"livered unto you, but *now* is my kingdom "not from hence." With great difficulty, therefore, Pilate is at last persuaded by the Jews, to give sentence against Christ: "We have a law, and by that law he "ought to die, because he made himself "the *Son of God.*" If by this declaration Christ meant only, that he was a Son of God in the general acceptation of the expression, it was surely incumbent upon him, to have rectified the mistaken notions of his countrymen, and not to have thrown

away

away his life by a silence, which might have been denominated sullen; but it was for bearing witness to this great truth alone, that he suffered death; and that no man might hereafter doubt, the Evangelist has added, as a convincing proof how clearly the Jews understood him, that they reviled him on the cross, for his (as they considered it) blasphemous presumption: "If "thou be the *Son of God*, come down "from the cross, and we will believe thee." "Let God deliver him now, if he will "have him, for he said, *I am the Son of* "*God*."

Thus have I endeavoured, as far as the time and place will allow me, to prove the Godhead and the Sonship of Christ, from the Scriptures only; I trust, not with the heat of an enthusiast, or the acrimony of a Polemic, but with the sincerity of a Christian, as a faithful dispenser of that

Gospel committed to my trust, and as a member of that Establishment, which it is no less my inclination, than it is my duty, to defend. Assembled Christians! ye who have the Scriptures in your native language always before you, are these things so? How long halt you between two opinions? If the Lord Jesus Christ be proved, by the writings of his Evangelists and Apostles, to be God, follow him, worship him, and adore him; and may the God of truth lead you into all truth, make you steadfast in believing, and zealous of good works, to the glory of your Creator and Redeemer, and to the promotion of your own happiness, and everlasting salvation.

SERMON III.

THE ADVENT OF CHRIST.

ISAIAH IX. 2.

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

IN remarking on the Advent or approach of our Saviour, two important questions offer themselves to our consideration; first, Whether the state of the world, at that period, with respect to religion and morals, was such, as to evince the necessity of a reformer; and, secondly, Whether sacred and profane history do agree in the time and circumstances of the Messiah's appearance. I shall confine the first part of this

enquiry to the Romans and the Jews only. The former worshipped a number of imaginary divinities, many of whom, according to their ideas, had been monarchs upon earth, whom the blind fanaticism, deplorable ignorance, and abject servility of their people, had exalted to deification, and whose conduct, as represented by their own priests, would (from their base participation in mortal sensualities) have disgraced the lowest orders of human nature. But this religion was only a species of Atheism; these gods were neither respected, loved, nor feared; mortals scrupled not to usurp their honours, and assume their names; one Roman general,* because the fleet of his adversary had been twice dispersed by a storm, fancied himself the son of the god of the sea; another,† actually denominated himself a well-known established deity; and,

* Pompey, jun. † Mark Antony.

worse

worse to relate, the infatuated multitude offered sacrifices, and paid divine honours, to a brutal sensualist and a public adulterer.* Such was the horrid tissue which ignorance and superstition had woven as a religion for the Gentiles. Those days (says a great defender of christianity,†) which were sacred to the honour of the Gods, were celebrated with such rites, that Cato, or any other virtuous heathen, would have been ashamed to have been present at them. If such were the vicious examples of the pretended heathen divinities, what must have been the morals of men? A savage ferocity of manners characterized those times; slaughter, proscriptions, and assassinations were general; suicide, the most

* Antony stiled himself Bacchus, and Cleopatra Isis. At a Roman banquet the guests came habited as different gods, and Augustus assumed the character of Apollo. Augustus was deified after his death, and Numericus Atticus swore he saw him ascending to Heaven.

† Grotius.

atrocious,

atrocious, the most unnatural of all murders, was considered a virtue; it was the coward's sole refuge from evils, which he had not the magnanimity to bear, and we read not only of the self-murder of individuals, but of whole cities.* An universal dissoluteness of manners prevailed; matrons, and men of rank, disgraced themselves by lascivious dances at the public theatres;† and the common people derived their chief amusement, from seeing numbers of gladiators hew each other in pieces.

Let us now review the religion and conduct of the once peculiar people of God. Though the Almighty had, by a very spe-

* Xanthius.

† Ut festis matrona moveri jussa diebus. Hor.

On choisissoit d'ordinaire de jeunes filles pour les danses quón faisoit a l'honneur des Dieux, mais il y avoit des fêtes ou l'on choisissoit des femmes mariées, comme par Exemple, aux fêtes de la Grande Decsse Cètoient les Pontifes qui les choisissoient, & qui leur ordonnoient de danser; cest pourquoi Horace dit içi *jussa*. Dacier.

cial

cial favour, committed his holy oracles to the Jews, yet had they been so ungrateful, as to slight and neglect so valuable a treasure; for, after the gift of prophecy ceased among them, and their scribes and rabbins came to interpret and comment on the sacred writings, they adulterated them to that degree, that they rendered them of none effect, by their false glosses and foolish traditions; they made the essence of their religion to consist in ceremonies and ablutions, whilst they trod under foot justice and judgment, the weightier matters of the law; and their worship was resolved into a set of formal shews and hypocritical pageantry. Puffed up, moreover, with arrogance and pride, at this their specious appearance, and at having a law, which would indeed have promoted their glory and happiness, if they had adhered to the true sense of it, they fancied they had

had a right to hate and to despise the rest of mankind, with whom they agreed in no one point, but in an extreme corruption of manners. The truth of this may be learnt from their own candid and authentic historian:—"There never was such "an age, (says he) since the creation, for "all manner of impiety, blood, and vio- "lence, as this juncture among the Jews: "they left no new wickedness to be either "done or thought of, or for invention itself "to work upon; never such agreement, "public and private, in all sorts of cor- "ruptions; never such an emulation, in "all things that were ill, who should out- "do the other. And who could expect "better from men who made no conscience "of affronting God himself; as in the use of "forbidden meats, renouncing the purity of "their profession, and departing from the "laws and customs of their forefathers.

"What

"What wonder to see a man inhuman to "his neighbour, that has no more reverence "for his Maker." Such is the strong language of Josephus.

I shall not fatigue your attention with a particular description of the three prevailing sects at that time among the Jews, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes, all of whom had widely departed from the Mosaic law; some of whom believed in the transmigration of the soul, whilst others seemed to deny its very existence, and had imbibed a number of Pagan superstitions: I shall only remark, in the words of a learned commentator, "That the condition mankind was in, "at the time of our Saviour's appearance in "the world, may very fitly be represented "under the idea of a person afflicted with "a deadly distemper, and the coming of our "blessed Lord be considered as the critical "time which was to decide either the death

"or

"or cure of that diseased person."* No one can deny, that a teacher of righteousness was indispensable at this juncture, to enforce the worship of the one true God, in spirit and in truth, and to reform the morals of mankind.

Let us now, secondly, examine the predictions of the prophets, and see how clearly both sacred and profane history point out their accomplishment in Christ: and, first of all, let us pay due consideration to that remarkable prophecy, contained in the 49th chapter of the book of Genesis; "And Ja-
"cob called his sons, and said, Gather your-
"selves together, that I may tell you that
"which shall befal you in the *last* days." Now the last days, and the days of the Messiah, were allowed by the Jews themselves to be synonymous. "The sceptre (continues he)
"shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-

* Beausobre.

"giver

" giver from between his feet, till Shiloh " come; and unto him shall the gathering " of the people be."—Verse 10. The best translators agree in rendering the latter verse thus; "The power of government shall not " depart from Judah, nor a judge of Israel " from among his descendants, till the " *prosperous Saviour* (the prosperous au- " thor of salvation and rest) come, and " to him shall the gathering of the Gen- " tiles be." The accomplishment of this prediction is evident. Nothing is more plain than that the offspring of Judah, the son of Jacob, did preserve their distinct existence as a tribe, together with a power of government, and judging of causes, till Jesus came in the flesh. The tribe of Judah were the most numerous when they came out of Egypt; they led the van in the Wilderness, they were divinely ordered to make the first attack on the remaining Canaanites,

Canaanites, and against the Benjamites at Gibeah. Othniel, the first of the judges, was of this tribe. Long the family of David, who belonged to this tribe, had the royal power; even under the Chaldeans and Persians, Jehoiakin, Zerubbabel, and Nehemiah, all of this tribe held a superiority; for about 160 years before Christ, the Maccabean priests and the family of Herod ruled over the Jews, both of which were in a manner incorporated into the tribe of Judah; and besides, the Sanhedrim of the Jewish elders had much power in their hands. At the birth of Jesus, according to Josephus, the sceptre departed from Judah; Judea became a Roman province; Herod received his sceptre as a gift from the Roman Triumvir.* Not long had the

* The Jews themselves confessed this truth at the crucifixion of our Lord; Pilate said, "Shall I crucify your "King?" the Jews answered, "We have no King but Cesar."

Gentiles

Gentiles begun to gather to, and obey our Saviour, when the Jewish church and state were quite overturned, the distinction of tribes for ever finished, the genealogies being lost. It is true they pretend since, to have had heads of their captivity; but where is their evidence, or where is the nation in which they have authority from their tyrannic masters, to judge and determine in any important point? Where is there any country under Heaven, where they have had, or now have, any share in the government? If they cannot produce tokens of power, for 1800 years past, the Messiah must certainly *be* come, and Jesus of Nazareth *be* the person.

I next proceed to lay before you some prophecies of Isaiah, a man of exalted birth, and extensive learning, for he is supposed to have been of the blood royal of the kings of Judah, and it is certain he wrote the

purest language of all the Hebrews, than whom no one of the prophets spoke more fully or more circumstantially of the Messiah. First of all, let us notice those passages of his which represent our Saviour's kingdom as a reign of peace; that the wolf should dwell with the lamb, the leopard lie down with the kid, and that the lion should eat straw like the ox. That this prophecy may probably be directed to the nature and expected effects of Christianity, and to the manner in which it should be propagated, neither by the sound of the trumpet, nor by the clash of arms, but by the still voice of reason and conviction, I by no means deny; its precepts are calculated for, and adapted to, the peace and happiness of empires: but surely we should not entirely pass over the wonderful circumstances of that period, in this respect. The Romans, and their imperial master, underwent

underwent a sudden and a total change, at the coming of Christ; that people, who, for near two centuries, had been constantly engaged in war, now enjoyed a repose of several years; for at this time there was a general peace all over the world: this awful moment of tranquillity commenced one year only before our Saviour's birth; it continued for twelve years; a proper prelude for ushering in his coming, who was the Prince of Peace, Christ our Lord.* A remarkable alteration took place in the temper and character of Augustus. He, who in his early life had been noted for an

* Milton has a fine allusion to this circumstance:—

"No war or battles sound
"Was heard the world around:
"The idle spear and shield were high up-hung;
"The hooked chariot stood,
"Unstain'd with hostile blood;
"The trumpet spake not to the armed throng;
"And kings sat still with awful eye,
"As if they surely knew their sov'reign Lord was nigh."

Hymn on the Nativity.

unsparing and savage cruelty, who had refused the rites of burial to a fallen enemy, saying, "He would find a grave in the "bellies of the vultures who devoured him," now pardoned repeated treacheries, and was seen in a court of justice pleading the rights of a common soldier; he gave his people the blessings, he taught them the arts of peace; he reformed their manners, he restrained the combats of the gladiators; and, above all, convinced even from common reason and the light of nature, how much the happiness of society depends on the purity of the female character, he taught the Roman women a strict attention to decency and decorum; he forbade them dancing on the public stage, or being present at the gymnastic exercises; he made his own family an example of reformation; and the same person who, in his youth, had not scrupled to take away the wife of another

another man, in his later years banished and punished his own daughter, for her licentious conduct. To what can we attribute this marvellous change, but to some great light, which the unseen hand of God was pleased to flash on his mind. We find the Augustan age most distinguished for the number of men of letters, one of whom* described the completion of some extraordinary prediction, and the appearance of some extraordinary person, though he knew not who he was, nor whence he came.

I have confined my observations, in this discourse, to the Roman empire only, because, as before mentioned, Judea was become a Roman province, and Greece, and many other countries, swallowed up in the enormous mass of her conquests, had lost their separate national existence. Though some philosophers of both countries had sense enough, from the light of nature, to

* Virgil.

discover the folly of Polytheism; though they had even faint notions of existence after death; yet were their ideas perplexed, confused, and uncertain; they wanted that glorious illumination, which brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel.

The profound ignorance of the grand mass of the Gentiles, and the light which they received from our Saviour, is alluded to, not only in the verse which forms the text, but also in many other passages of Isaiah. "I the Lord have called thee in righte-"ousness, and will hold thine hand, and "will keep thee, and give thee for a cove-"nant of the people, for a light of the "Gentiles. To open the blind eyes, to "bring out the prisoners from the prison, "and them that sit in darkness out of the "prison-house. Then the eyes of the blind "shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf "shall be unstopped. And the eyes of them "*that* see shall not be dim, and the ears

"of

" of them that hear shall hearken. Hear " ye deaf, and look ye blind that ye *may* " see. And I will bring the blind by a " way that they knew not, I will lead them " in paths that they have not known, I " will make darkness light before them, " and crooked things straight. They shall " be turned back, *they shall be greatly* " *ashamed, that trust in graven images,* " *that say to the molten images,* " *ye are* " *our gods.*" Again he says, " Bring forth " the blind people that have eyes, and the " deaf that have ears." Can any language more strongly, more beautifully, more poetically, depicture the mental darkness of the people than this? But on the effect which Christianity had on the Gentiles, I shall enlarge more fully on a future occasion. The prophecy of Daniel, that Christ should come before the destruction of the second temple built by Herod; the expectation of

Simeon and Anna, that our Saviour was now about to come; the acknowledgment of Josephus, the great historian of the Jews, and of Simeon and Anna, that our Saviour actually *was come*, are all corroborating proofs, that sacred and profane history agree in the time and circumstances of the Messiah's appearance, and justify the advice of our blessed Master to the Jews: "Search "the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye "have eternal life, and they are they which "testify of me." Such are the observations I have thought proper to lay before you, as a preface merely to further information; if I shall be thought by some, to refer too much to profane history, my apology is, that in this age of scepticism, whenever the authenticity of the holy Scriptures is called in question, "*the times* "*require it.*" I am well aware, at the same moment, that though historical accounts

counts may amuse your fancy, improve your understandings, or inform your minds; that though the application of prophecies, may strengthen and confirm your faith; it is only from the sacred volume of the Gospel, that you can derive and collect incitements and injunctions, to the amelioration of your morals, the amendment of your hearts. From those inspired writings, let us study to acquire wisdom unto salvation; let us read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them; that by patience and comfort of God's holy word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which he has given us in our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

SERMON IV.

THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST.

ISAIAH XI. 10.

And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek, and his rest shall be glorious.

HAVING, in a former discourse, remarked on the time of the Messiah's coming, and shewn the coincidence of sacred and profane history in that event, I proceed now to relate and comment upon the Birth of Christ, and to shew how remarkably the prophecies are fulfilled, in the circumstances of himself, his incarnation, and his family. "In those days, (says "the text) there shall be a root out of "the

" the stem of Jesse," or as we may translate it, a twig, or branch. Now this expression does not denote a tree in full health and vigour, throwing out many branches, but the old trunk or stump of a tree, with just life and strength sufficient to put forth this one shoot: such was the condition of this once royal family, when our Saviour was born in it. His reputed father, a man of so little consequence in society, as to be thrust into a stable, even when the partner of his journey stood in need of the tenderest offices of humanity. At the same time, low as the parents of our Saviour were in the eye of the world, in the sight of Heaven they were eminently distinguished for piety towards God, and justice towards men. We all know with what implicit submission Joseph received the commands of the Most High, and the speedy acquiescence with which the Mother

of

of our Lord acknowledged the appeal to the omnipotence of God, as fully sufficient to divert, and set aside, the seldom deviating course of nature. The Gospel historians have taken ample pains to prove, that Christ was a branch from the stem of Jesse, in the line of Joseph, whose adopted Son he was, and by such adoption heir to every paternal right, heir to the throne of David. Moreover, to obviate every cavil, his descent from David is clearly shewn from Heli, the descendant of Nathan, the son of David; and that no prophecy might fall to the ground as of little consequence, this genealogy comprehends the promises made to Eve, to Abraham, and to David. To the woman it was declared, "That her descendant "should bruise the Serpent's head,"* should overcome the Devil, and crush the powers of darkness; to Abraham it was promised, that "In his seed should all the nations

* Genesis iii. 15.

"of

"of the earth be blessed;"* to David it was declared, that God would establish the throne of his kingdom for ever: "I will "be to him a Father, and he shall be to me "a Son. And thine house and thy king- "dom shall be established for ever before "thee, thy throne shall be established for "ever."† By Moses it was also asserted, "A "prophet shall the Lord your God raise up "unto you of your brethren, like unto me; "him shall ye hear in all things, what- "soever he shall say unto you. And it "shall come to pass, that every soul which "will not hear that prophet, shall be de- "stroyed from among the people."‡ The express and clear declarations of the nature of our Saviour's kingdom, his own unreserved assertion, that "It was not of "this world," must create a considerable degree of astonishment in us Gentiles, at

* Gen. xxii. 18. † 2 Sam. vii. 14, 16. ‡ Deut. xviii. 15.

the

the blindness and incredulity of the Jews. That a people, who, during their many and long captivities, had preserved the volume of sacred writ, should be ignorant of so material a part of it, is indeed surprizing. Historical evidence; the overthrow of so many vast empires at that moment before their eyes, Greece, Persia, Egypt; the subjection of their own government, along with the rest, to the Roman yoke, might surely have suggested to them, that an empire acquired by conquest, and kept by force of arms, was hardly likely to be an everlasting kingdom, a dominion without end. How much rather should sound reason, and the oracles of God, have taught them, that an empire over the hearts and minds of men, by true religion, and pure morality, must be that intended and foretold: "Men shall be taught of God, (says "the Scripture) I will put my laws in "their

"their hearts, and in their minds will I "write them."* As all the prophecies respecting the time and manner of our Saviour's birth were fulfilled, so was also that remarkable one of its place. Now this circumstance did by no means depend on the will of the Jews, or of the Parents of our Lord, but on the will of God, who was pleased to make the emperor's decree the instrument of his design, and thus to accomplish the prediction of his holy prophet Micah: "And thou Bethlehem Eph- "ratah, in the land of Judah, (for there "was another Bethlehem, in the land of "Zebulon) though thou be little among "the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee "shall come forth to me, one, that is to be "a ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have "been from *of old, from everlasting.*"† Surely this must be allowed a remarkable

* Heb. x. 16. † Micah v. 2.

prophecy

demption, and everlasting salvation? Fine proofs of wisdom, information, and sagacity!

In my last discourse, I laid before you the prophecies of Isaiah respecting the Gentiles, in which they were represented as being naturally blind, yet enabled by the Gospel to receive preternatural light. I purpose now to shew you, that the same prophet represents the Jews, as enjoying the clearest natural light, yet wandering in the mist of error, and of wilful blindness. "The light shined in darkness, and "the darkness comprehended it not. There "was darkness over all the land of Israel "so thick that it might be felt. The deaf "adder stopped her ears at the voice of "the charmer, and would not hear, charmed "he never so wisely." "And the Lord "said, go, and tell this people, hear ye "indeed, but understand not; and see ye "indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart

"of

"of this people fat, and make their ears "heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they "see with their eyes, and hear with their "ears, and understand with their hearts, "and be converted, and I should heal "them."* "The ox knoweth his owner, "and the ass his master's crib, but Israel "knoweth not me, neither doth my people "consider." "Ah sinful nation, a people "laden with iniquity. A race of evil "doers, children degenerate. They have "forsaken Jehovah; they have rejected "with disdain the holy one of Israel; they "have turned their backs upon him." Any one may understand this prophecy, and justly apply it to the Jews. Unconvinced by all his miracles, unmoved by the Hosannas of the croud, and the inspired acclamations of the children in the temple, they were sore displeased. They requested our

* Isaiah vi.

Saviour to rebuke them, but he answered, "These children are now fulfilling the will "of the Most High, delivered in the words "of David," "Out of the mouths of babes "and sucklings hast thou perfected praise."* "They are now performing that sacred duty, "which your malice and your blindness "prevents you from doing." The witnesses of our Saviour's birth were shepherds; the companions of his life were Galilean fishermen; St. Matthew was a publican, a tax-gatherer, the odious instrument of foreign oppression; were these men likely (let me ask) to support an artful scheme of delusion, and to render it popular? Men whose daily labour was requisite to procure their daily bread, could not have much leisure, and certainly not much inclination, to assist in any "cunningly de-"vized fable," which on its very threshold

* Matt, xxi. 16.

held

held forth but the sad prospect of misery, contempt, and death. The Jews expressed a wonder at the wisdom of our Saviour, but that wonder was not strong enough to overcome their unaccountable prejudices. "How knoweth this man letters, having "never learned?"* was an important observation, but what inference did they draw from it? "Howbeit, said they, or however, "we know this man whence he is; but "when Christ cometh, no man knoweth "whence he is." How unlike the candid inference of the Gentiles, who, when they heard the Apostles, though all of them Galileans, "Speak in their own tongues in which "they were born, (that is in the language "of each man's different country) the wonderful works of God, gladly received "their words, were converted and baptized "to the number of three thousand souls

* John vii. 15.

" in one day."* Next, let us shew, that the Gentiles sought to this ensign or standard.

First, several circumstances strongly conduced to prepare the Gentile world for the coming of the Messiah. About four hundred years before that event, that great patron of learning, and learned men, Ptolemy Philadelphus, by causing the Scriptures of the Old Testament to be translated into the Greek language, had called forth the attention of many nations, to the prophecies concerning Christ; and enabled them to peruse them in a modern, and indeed vernacular tongue. This copy of the Old Testament, called the Septuagint, because it was committed to seventy the most learned men that could be found, however it may, at this juncture, differ from the original Hebrew, and bear strong marks of corruption, interpolation, and omission, was nevertheless at the first, and during

* Acts ii. 6.

a great

a great number of years, well received, and much esteemed, by the Jews, and it is quoted by our Saviour and his Apostles. Secondly, many, both of the Grecian and Roman philosophers, as I have before observed, were enabled, from the light of nature, to discover the error of Polytheism, to despise the vicious actions ascribed to the Pagan deities, and to turn their view to the one holy and true God. They plainly perceived, that these fables of the different divinities, were the poetical allegories of a rude and uncultivated people, which had, insensibly as it were, grown upon them, and had been handed down to their posterity by oral tradition, or in the elegant fictions of their favourite bards. It is true that the dread of popular fury, and rooted prejudice, prevented many of these enlightened men from openly declaring their opinions, but such we learn from history they had undoubtedly

impiety to reject Christianity, and to want further confirmation and conviction; but they by no means deserve such indulgence.

Lastly, with respect to the glorious rest of Christ. The Jews were promised, at their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, a rest in the land of Canaan. This was nevertheless understood by the Jews themselves, to prefigure, and signify before hand, the rest of Christ in Heaven. But all the promises of God to the Jews, were conditional, and his offended Majesty had declared, "That they "were a people who erred in their hearts, and "therefore should not enter into his rest."* The rest that Christ shall establish will be glorious, not only everlasting peace and happiness in his heavenly kingdom, to those who have been his faithful servants in this mortal state, but unspeakable joy and glory in the presence of God, and in the company of wise, exalted, and pure spirits.

* Heb. iii. 11.

In

In conclusion. As almost all ranks of people in this country, celebrate with joy this high festival, let it be done with becoming mirth, sober conviviality, and rational liberality, not with drunkenness, riot, or profusion. Shall the birth-day of the most refined moralist be defiled by debauchery and immorality? Shall the poor be forgotten on that day, when *he* was born, who lived to comfort and support the poor, who taught the ignorant, and fed the fainting multitude? Finally, Shall the nativity of that Redeemer, who came down from Heaven to banish sin and wickedness from the world, be made a pretext and a cloak, for the commission of the most disorderly practices? Let us not forget his example, his injunction, nor his intent; for "For this cause did Christ come "down from Heaven, that he might purify "unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of "good works."*

* Titus ii. 14.

SERMON V.

SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

1 CORINTH. XI. 26.

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

THE Church to which we belong has retained only two Sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper; the latter of which I shall, in this discourse, fully and circumstantially consider: and, first, its name and cause, the circumstances which took place at its first institution, the intent of our Saviour by it, and the conduct of his Disciples, and of his Apostle St. Paul, in this respect.

Secondly, I shall trace its progressive history from the time of the Apostles, and shew the

the corruptions it received from the Romish Clergy.

Thirdly, I shall attempt to account for some of the motives, which occasion even the members of the Church of England to absent themselves from it.

Fourthly, I shall endeavour to point out the unreasonableness of such conduct, and the benefit which all must undoubtedly receive from it, as men, as members of society, and as Christians.

The word sacrament is derived from a similar Latin one, which had several significations; as, a pledge deposited for the issue of a law suit, a mystery, a military oath, by which the Roman soldiers bound themselves to be faithful to their commanders, and in this sense it is used by two of the best Latin authors.* The name of sacrament is, with the

* Livy, book 22.—Horace says,
"Non perfidum dixi Sacramentum."

strictest

strictest propriety, applied by the fathers to the Lord's Supper, since it is a test whereby we openly profess ourselves Christ's faithful soldiers and servants, unto our lives' end.

The Mosaic law was extremely burthensome to the Jews; it was full of ceremonies, and sacrifices of the blood of bulls and of goats, with which God had frequently declared himself, by the mouth of his prophets, not satisfied, preferring mercy and goodness before them all. The Messiah, at his coming, abolished such rites, leaving in their stead these two sacraments only, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. By the first, our sponsors promise, that we shall be dedicated to God, and brought up in the Christian religion; by the second, we ourselves openly declare, that we have been so, and that we attest ourselves to be Christians before all the world. Our Saviour, who observed the Mosaic ordinances, (judging it becoming to fulfil

fil all righteousness, to comply with every religious ceremony, which had a tendency to promote that end), was extremely desirous to eat the Passover with his Disciples, before he suffered; as soon as this had been done, he considered the law and the prophets as fulfilled, and introduced the new covenant to them. "Drink ye all of this, for this is my blood "of the New Testament, which is shed not "only for you, but for many, for the remis-"sion of their sins;"* which God will pass over and forgive, as his avenging Angel passed over and spared the lives of the Children of Israel in Egypt. "This do in re-"membrance of me,"† says St. Luke; that is, do this hereafter in your religious assemblies, in remembrance of me, your gracious Master, and of the benefits which arise to you, and to all mankind, by the sacrifice of my body and blood. Now remembrance un-

* Matthew xxvi. 27, 28, &c. † Luke xxii. 19.

 doubtedly

doubtedly implies continuation, since no one can think any ceremony necessary to remember a person present, but absent; and though there be no positive mention of its being taken by the Apostles, except in the 7th verse of the 20th chapter of the Acts, yet no doubt can be entertained of St. Paul's partaking of it; for he would scarcely refuse the sanction of his own example, to the advancement of the doctrine he delivered, and which, he positively asserts, he had received the divine command to press on the Corinthian Christians.

Secondly. The ancient fathers of the Church recommended the use, end, efficacy, and nature of this sacrament; that by it we should keep the Saviour of the World in constant remembrance, and acknowledge the redemption he has purchased for us by his blood. The first of these fathers whom I shall mention, is Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna,

na, who, whilst young, was St. John's disciple, instructed also by other Apostles, being familiarly acquainted with many who had seen our Lord upon earth, as Irenæus informs us. This Polycarp had a dispute with Anicetus, Bishop of Rome, respecting the moveable feast of Easter; they nevertheless communicated together at the holy sacrament, and Anicetus, to shew his respect for Polycarp, permitted him to consecrate the elements in his church. In the life of Cyprian we find this expression: "They there-
" fore thought it necessary that penitents
" should be animated to sacrifice their lives
" for Christ, by being admitted into his
" church; concluding that they could not
" be encouraged to drink of the cup of mar-
" tyrdom, whilst they were denied the cup
" of the Lord." These historical facts bring the account of this sacrament down to the year of our Lord 252. St Gregory, in his

Eucharistical Panegyric, brings it down to the year 265. St. Chrysostom to the fourth century, and warmly adds, "not to commu- "nicate in these mystical suppers, is hunger "and death."* St. Augustin brings it down to the fifth Century. I shall pass over the other authorities, and only observe, that it was continued by all the Roman bishops, from Leo the first; and that in England, there was an old law of Canute, passed about the tenth century, which says, "Let "every Christian man prepare himself "thrice in the year, to the receiving the "Lord's body." Eusebius says, from Hegesippus, that men began gradually to corrupt Christianity, by the introduction of ceremonies for which they had no scriptural authority; and, amongst the rest, they started the monstrous notion of our Saviour's bodily

* Non communicare mysticis his Cœnis et fames est et mors.

presence

presence in this sacrament, five hundred years after his death, which arose chiefly from the indiscretion of preachers and writers of warm imagination, who, instead of explaining judiciously the lofty figures of Scripture language, heightened and went beyond them, until both it and they had their meaning mistaken most astonishingly; and at length the doctrine of transubstantiation (1300 years ago) was established as a gospel truth, by the pretended authority of the church of Rome. It will be needless, however, to enter into a long argument to refute this opinion; every unbigoted and sensible person will allow, that our Saviour, at its institution, must have spoken in a figurative sense: the Jews, indeed, chose, as usual, to misunderstand him; "Can this man give us his flesh "to eat?" this is impossible; and to prevent any such ideas from taking place, our church expressly denominates the elements, "crea-

"tures of bread and wine," and that we eat the flesh, and drink the blood of Christ, "spiritually," or only in a spiritual sense.*

We have now proved, that this sacrament was all along continued after the death of our Saviour; it was also received, not by the priests only, but by the laity, in almost all ages. Of this we may be assured, from the passage of Cyprian quoted above, as also from another of Justin Martyr, written in the year of our Lord 120, which was only fourscore or ninety years after the death of Christ. He informs us, "That those called "deacons, gave to each, and to every one "present, to partake of the sacramental "bread, and wine and water;" for it is to be observed, that the Ancients sometimes mingled water with the wine, and which in-

* Note also, that our Saviour called the contents of the cup, "this fruit of the vine."—Matt. xxvi. Luke xxii. &c.

deed

deed was not improper, as the contents of the cup were equally a symbol, figure, and representation of the blood of Christ. We also find, that it was continued by one not actually present at the last supper; that its continuance was enjoined the church of Corinth by St. Paul, being comprehended in the directions for its fit participation. It has been also shewn, that it was received by one instructed by St. John; its progress has been traced till it became corrupted by the church of Rome; it is proved, that even in a most unenlightened era of this country, it was held right, that every Christian should communicate thrice in the year; and though the reformation cleared it from the superstitious notion of transubstantiation, it did by no means abate the necessity of its reception, but has left Canute's law in full force, and positively enjoins all Christians to receive this sacrament thrice in the year.

Thirdly. I shall now attempt to account for some of the motives which prevent a due attendance at this holy sacrament. There is something so extremely solemn in this ceremony, and the language made use of by St. Paul is so strong, that the uneducated and ignorant are as it were overawed, and feel a difficulty in surmounting their fears upon this occasion. This is one reason of their absence, and it is our duty to explain to such, that these expressions are not likely to be applied to them. The Corinthians never properly considered the Lord's body; they so far forgot the benevolence and temperance of Christians, that the rich refused to share their bread and wine with the poor; they were wicked enough to intoxicate themselves in the church, and at the ceremony; so that first, it was not a communion;* and

* Cœna vocatur a communione vescentium *coinon* quippe Græci *commune* dicunt.

secondly,

secondly, they were undoubtedly guilty of prophaning the body and blood of Christ. To stop the progress of such enormous wickedness, called for strong language, and temporal punishment. But as such indecent and irreverent behaviour has never yet happened in the Church of England (and I trust never will), it is morally impossible for any of us to eat and drink his own damnation; or, as the word (crima) has been elsewhere rendered by the same writer, a judgment, or sentence of condemnation, on ourselves; for since the preparation is so simple, as that we should sincerely repent us of our former sins, and be in charity with all men, it is in every one's power to be a worthy partaker. With respect to the posture in which this sacrament is received, it is not to be doubted, but that at its first institution, the Apostles were recumbent, or sitting at meat.* It was the

* Quia Cœna Domini communis fuit omnibus *recumbentibus*, non solum bonis sed etiam Iudæ proditori.

custom

custom in those days, for persons at their meals to recline on little sophas, or couches, as may be learnt from several writers of that time.* In what posture the first Christians received it, or how long they were in its celebration, is not material; neither is the time at which we receive it. Tertullian informs us, that in times of persecution, the eucharist was celebrated in their assemblies before day. "We of our church (says a learned commentator†) receive the sacrament kneeling, "not to acknowledge any corporeal presence of Christ's natural flesh and blood, "as our church, to prevent all possibility of "misconstruction, expressly declares, adding, that his body is in Heaven, and not "here, but to worship him who is every "where present, the invisible God. And "this posture of kneeling we by no means

* "Toro sic orsus ab alto."
"Stratoq super discumbitur ostro."—VIRGIL.

† Secker.

"look

"look upon as in itself necessary, but as a "becoming appointment, and very fit to ac- "company the prayers and praises we offer "up at the instant of receiving, and to ex- "press that inward spirit of piety and hu- "mility, on which our partaking worthily "of this ordinance, and receiving benefit "from it, depend." Another reason which may induce some to absent themselves from this sacrament, is a procrastinating disposition, and a want of resolution to do what they acknowledge to be right. It is a general custom, even with those who are rarely seen at the Lord's table, to be extremely anxious for having the communion administered to them in their last sickness, or on their death bed, as it is usually called. I do not mean to discuss, at present, the power of a death bed repentance, nor to find fault with this desire; I would only wish to place it in its true light, and to shew that no extraordinary

traordinary efficacy ought to be attached to it. The joining in this ceremony at that period only, cannot atone for all the errors of a mispent life, nor be a palliation for the former neglect of religious duties. Those various rites which were laid upon the Jews, were, as the Apostle observes, "imposed "upon them till the time of reformation." The Romish Church has her seven sacraments, and attaches too much consequence to extreme unction, the administration of the host to the dying sinner, and to many ceremonies, for which there is no scriptural authority. The blessed Founder of our Religion has (as I before observed) instituted only two rites: as a clear injunction for the first, Christ has commanded us "to go, baptize all "nations, in the name of the Father, and of "the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:"* for the latter, he says, "Do this in remem-

* Matthew xxviii. 19.

"brance

"brance of me."* The administration, therefore, of the Lord's Supper, to persons in extreme sickness, should only be thought an opportunity afforded them, to testify the sincerity of their repentance; that they give this assurance of their dying in the faith and communion of Jesus Christ, in entire resignation to the will of God, thus calling them from this mortal world, and in perfect charity with all mankind. And it is far better that they should not defer this ceremony to their death, but be constant attendants at the Lord's table, at the periods of health, and in the vigor of life.

Fourthly. It now remains, lastly, that I lay before you, the benefits that will arise from the partaking in this sacrament, to all, as men, as members of society, and as Christians. The preparation which our church requires is, "that we repent us truly of our

* Luke xxii.

"sins

" sins past, and are in perfect charity with " all men." The review of our own hearts, and mode of life, both public and private, cannot but be attended with the best effects; we are brought by such reflection before the tribunal of our conscience, and are led to settle our account with God, in which we are all certainly debtors to his goodness, and dependants on his merey: we consider what our sins have been, we are sensible of our manifold transgressions, and we sincerely repent them. Without stated periods for this review of our couduct, we might be induced to postpone the painful enquiry, and, by deferring repentance, continue in sin, till we found ourselves alike on the eve of amendment, and on the brink of the grave. The next advantage that attends this ceremony is, our being in charity with all men, a peculiar mark and distinction of the Christian religion. This leads us to remember, that we

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are all men and brethren; that though an equality of rank or riches is not possible in this world, yet that we are all earth of the same earth, liable to the same punishments, and heirs of the same advantages in another. It teaches us that benevolence is the duty of all, and pride their disgrace. A particular blame that St. Paul laid upon the Corinthians was, "When ye come together, (said "he) to celebrate this rite, the commemora- "tion of your meek and generous Master, "every one taketh before other his own sup- "per; and one is hungry, absolutely de- "fective in his supply of this communion, "whilst another takes it to such excess, that "he is drunken. What! (continues the "Apostle) have ye not houses to eat and to "drink in? or despise ye your poorer bre- "thren who have none? I commend you "not for this, ye come not together for the "better, but for the worse:"* that is, in-

* 1 Cor. xi.

stead

stead of receiving the benefit you would naturally do, from the fit participation of a religious rite, you are guilty of despising and prophaning it, which is worse than an absolute neglect of it. Thus far have I laid before your view, the due consideration of this sacrament, from a desire to enforce the necessity of this pious and peculiarly Christian duty, from a sincere endeavour to remove a slavish fear on the one hand, as a criminal neglect on the other. It is the duty of the elder, and the well-informed, to explain it to the young and the illiterate, and to press upon them the propriety (if they call themselves members of a certain church) of conforming to its rules and ordinances. Let not our minds be dejected with unnecessary terrors; we have a Redeemer who is touched with a sense of our infirmities, and who "ever liveth "to make intercession for us." We never can suppose, that a beneficent God gave us religion to make us miserable, but to make

us happy. Christianity was never designed to be shewn through the grate of a cloister, by Pharasaical fast, by corporeal punishment and penance, by the telling of beads, or the jingling of bells. It was intended to be expanded and incorporated into society, to be visible in every action, to be evident in the practice of every moral duty. Our Saviour says to his Disciples, "Go, teach all nations. I send "you as sheep among wolves; unite the "wisdom of the serpent with the innocence "of the dove."* God gave to man an upright countenance, that he might raise to his Maker the cheerful note of praise, that he might lift his hands in thanksgiving for past benefits, in prayer for a continuance of them, or for support and assistance under affliction. Let no vain fears distract us from our duty; man was never intended, like the devils, to

* Matthew x. 16.

believe and tremble, his mind was to feel the joyful hope of immortality, his breast to be warmed with the cheering sun of a good conscience. If there be any sect in the world at present, which teaches men, with countenances disfigured by melancholy, to grovel in the dust of dejection, to take off the hand from the calls of honest industry, to wander about neglecting the important duties of life, for the SOLE purpose of performing religious offices, that sect is fast approximating to the fanaticism of the Romish church, and sowing thick the seeds of error amongst mankind.

Finally. As the preparation for this sacrament is so simple, none can plead want of time, or hurry of business, as an excuse for neglecting it. Those who lead a life of piety and benevolence, are at all times ready to join in it; to those, on the contrary, who turn their backs upon it, because they will not seriously consider, and repent of their sins,

sins, it is not the preparation of a week, nor of a year, nor of an age, that will qualify them; nothing but repentance and charity, and surely without these, no one is either fit to live, or fit to die.

SERMON VI.

THE ATONEMENT OF CHRIST.

1 CORINTH. XV. 3.

For I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures.

I Purpose, in this discourse, to treat, first, of the Atonement and Vicarious Sacrifice of Christ; secondly, to mention, briefly, his Death and Resurrection.

The objections to the first head are, that surely God could have devised some better method for the redemption of mankind, than the death of his own Son; and that there seems a manifest injustice, in making the innocent suffer for the guilty. It is the highest degree of presumption in us, to call in question

tion the designs of the Almighty, or to suppose that we can point out to him, improvements in the dispensations of his providence: we are to acquiesce, with gratitude and silence, in all his decrees; it is sufficient for us to know, that his revealed word has declared it, and that the Scripture tells us so; "For God so loved the world, that he gave "his only begotten Son, that whosoever be- "lieveth in him, should not perish, but have "everlasting life."* "In this was mani- "fested the love of God towards us, be- "cause that God sent his only begotten "Son into the world, that we might live "through him."† "Herein is love, not "that we loved God, but that he loved "us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation "for our sins."‡ "He that spared not his "own Son, but delivered him up for us all, "how shall he not with him, freely give us

* John iii. 16. † 1 Epist. John, iv. 9. ‡ Ibid 10.

"all things?"* To find fault with the means of our redemption, or to suppose that better could have been adopted, is just as absurd as to murmur, because the fruits of the earth are not given to us in a state of present perfection, by which we must perish, if our care and foresight did not obviate the delay of vegetation to maturity. The sacrifice of Christ's death, was a most affecting acknowledgment of the infinite guilt and demerit of sin; it was a most forcible declaration of God's severity against our sins. No wise governor should suffer his laws to be broken with impunity, nor sacrifice his justice to his mercy. Since, in consideration of our pardon, God would admit no meaner sacrifice than the precious blood of his own eternal Son, he has hereby expressed the utmost indignation against sin, which he could possibly shew, except he were determined never

* Rom. viii. 32.

to

to pardon at all. Be it remembered, however, that the anger of God is not a passion, or mental perturbation, but a judicial displeasure. Again, as the sacrifice of the death of Christ is voluntary, it must convince us of the infinite love of God and of our Saviour, as set forth in those places of Scripture before mentioned, and as a sure and certain ground of our hope of pardon, if we repent and amend. His death was admitted and accepted by God, in lieu of the punishment which was due to him from mankind, and it is this that completes it an expiatory sacrifice, and without this, it had been altogether insignificant to the expiation of sin, notwithstanding all the above-named qualifications, for it is the personal punishment of the offender which sin gives God a right to, and which the obligation of his violated law exacts.*

Secondly; as to punishing the innocent for the guilty, in the case of the death of

* Vide Scott's Christian Life.

Christ; what is objected to his sacrifice, may be objected to every sacrifice whatever. If any vicarious human sacrifice is accepted, the victim must be innocent, otherwise he bears his own sins, and not those of others, he deserves death for his own transgressions. It is impossible that any man, except Christ, could be a vicarious sacrifice: "There is no "man that liveth and sinneth not."* "There "is none righteous, no not one."† But our Saviour says to the Jews, "Which of you "convinceth me of sin?"‡ And his Apostle says of him, "He did no sin, neither was "guile found in his mouth."§ He, therefore, and he only, as the Lamb of God without blemish, could take away the sins of the world. Every animal sacrifice, was that of the innocent for the guilty; and this was not

* Rom. iii. 10.

† Psalm xiv. 1.

‡ John viii. 46.—"Convinces" might have been rendered "accuses," "proves me guilty of."

§ 1 Peter, ii. 22. Vide also Heb. vii. 26.

merely

merely the sentiment of the Jewish law, but the universal creed of all the Gentile world. But, as I said before, I do not mean to enter into the reasonableness or unreasonableness of this belief, or to discuss the placability or implacability of the Deity; but to shew, that the death of Christ, as an atonement for the sins of the whole world, is truly a Scripture doctrine, as may be proved, not only from the New, but from various passages of the Old Testament. Under this bulwark I shall shelter myself at once, convinced that I require no other.

The first passage incumbent on us to notice, is the 53d chapter of the Prophet Isaiah, because this contains the whole scheme and substance of the Christian atonement; indeed, so ample and comprehensive is the description here given, that the writers of the New Testament have had it particularly in view, insomuch that there is scarcely a passage

sage in either the gospels or epistles, relating to the sacrificial nature, and atoning virtue of the death of Christ, that may not obviously be traced to this exemplar,* the most striking of which is that in the 8th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. Philip, the Disciple of Christ, is commanded by the Holy Spirit to put himself in the way of the chief minister of the Queen of Ethiopia: he finds him reading, in the Prophet Isaiah, this very 53d chapter now under our consideration: he is at a loss to know the prophets allusion, whether he speaks of himself herein, or of some other; he is desirous, therefore, to be informed by the Apostle. Then Philip opens his mouth, begins at the same Scripture, and preaches unto him Jesus; or in other words, applies the whole prophecy to Christ, as follows. The first expression of this chapter, sets forth the incredulity of the Jews, and

* Vide Magee, to whose learned notes I am much indebted.

the

the difficulty to make them comprchend the Messiah, called here the Arm or Power of God, because the Almighty power of God was seated in him. The next two verses describe his humility, the contumely of his reception, the persecution of his life, and the cruelty of his death. "Yet (says the prophet) though "we thought him stricken, smitten of God, "and afflicted for his own demerits, yet he "hath borne our sins, the infirmities of our "nature, and carried our sorrows and afflic- "tions." To bear the sins of another, in this, and in thirty-seven other places in Scripture, signifies to undergo the consequences, or to suffer the punishment of them; but this is rendered still more clear in the following verses: "He was wounded for our trans- "gressions, he was smitten for our iniquities. "The chastisement by which our peace was "effected, was laid upon him; and by his "bruises we are healed. And Jehovah hath

"thrown

" ciled to God through the death of his son." Stronger still are those passages of the same Apostle, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, where he draws the parallel between the typical sacrifices of old, and the real sacrifice of Christ, which I quoted at large in my first discourse. What was the slaying of a poor animal to be offered to a merciful God; what the sprinkling the blood and the ashes of the victim, towards the purifying of the temple, &c.; of what signification were all these things, but as types of the sacrifice of Christ? In short, admit the sacrifice of Christ to be held in view in the institutions of the law, and every part is plain and intelligible; reject that notion, and every theory devised by the ingenuity of man, to explain the nature of ceremonial worship, becomes trifling and inconsistent. In this great sacrifice of Christ, these typical sacrifices of the law receive their consummation, and the institution closes, as it ought

to

do, with the completion of its object, the death of Christ;* "For if the blood of bulls "and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, "sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the "purifying of the flesh, how much more "shall the blood of Christ, who, through the "eternal spirit, offered himself without spot "to God, purge your consciences from dead "works to serve the living God."† "Christ "has redeemed us from the curse of the law, "being made a curse for us;"‡ and thus, "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall "all be made alive." "For God hath "commended his love towards us, in that "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for "us, by whom we have now received the "atonement.§ For if, when we were ene-"mies, we were reconciled to God by the "*death of his Son*, much more being re-

* Magee. † Heb. ix.
‡ Galat. iii. 13. § Romans v. 11.

"conciled

" conciled we shall be saved by his life." The Apostle has told us in the text, that Christ died for our sins, *according to the Scriptures*; that this is true, numberless passages prove. If we are allowed to call the mercy of God in question, or to debate upon the propriety of the means which he has employed for our redemption, we may be philosophers perhaps, but we are not Christians. What God has been pleased to reveal, it is our duty to believe; but if we are to refer every thing to the standard of human reason, and that we are only to believe what we can understand, there is no occasion either for faith or revelation. Our Saviour also declares himself to be a vicarious sacrifice; " I lay down my life for the sheep."* At his ceremony of the last supper, the establishment of a new covenant, he says to his Disciples, that his body is given for them,

* John x. 15.

and

and that his blood is shed for them, and for many, for the remission of their sins, as the prophet Isaiah had before said; "That he bare the sins of many:" so St. Mathew and St. Mark repeat, "That he "he gave his life a ransom for many."* The account also which St. John gives of the words of the High Priest, are entitled to our particular notice; "Ye know nothing at all "(says he), nor consider, that it is expe- "dient for us, that one man should die for "the people, and that the whole nation pe- "rish not; and this he spake, not of him- "self, but being High Priest that year, he "*prophesied* that Jesus should die for that "nation; and not for that nation only, but "that he should also gather together in one "the children of God, that were scattered "abroad."† The Evangelist tells us, that

* Matthew xx. 28. Mark x. 45.
† John xi. 49.

Caiaphas did not speak these words of *himself*, that is, of his own suggestion, but that the Holy Spirit of God had caused his High Priest, as had not been unusual in ancient times, to utter a prophecy of the sacrifice of Christ, for the whole people of Israel, and indeed for the whole world. If the High Priest had only meant, that we must sacrifice a man, though innocent, to the prejudices of the Romans, what occasion would there have been for that strong word (prophesy)? his natural reason, or rather his subtle policy, would have easily suggested to him such a measure, and he would certainly have found no scruple in his own unjust and cruel heart. But further, Christ was not only a sacrifice, he was *a willing sacrifice*, all his assertions are to this effect; "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I "lay down my life, that I might take it "again. No man taketh it from me, but I

"lay

"lay it down of myself. I have power to "lay it down, and I have power to take it "again."* When the zeal and impetuosity of Peter, would have led him to offer strong resistance to the apprehenders of his Master, our Saviour rebuked him in these words: "Put up again thy sword into its place: the "cup which my father hath given me, "shall I not drink it?"† "Thinkest thou "that I cannot now pray the Father, and he "shall give me more than twelve legions of "Angels; but then how can the Scriptures "be fulfilled that thus it must be?" At the moment also of his death, Christ exclaimed upon the Cross, "It is finished," all the prophecies are now fulfilled as far as belongs to my life; the important work for which I came into the world is now completed; the demands of the law are satisfied; the justice of God is atoned; and my sufferings are now

* John x. 17, 18. † John xviii, 11. Matt. xxvi. 53, 54.

at an end. And, crying out again with a great and strong voice, which plainly shewed that much of nature was yet in him, he said, with a lively faith and holy joy, Father, (for so I will still call thee, though that claim is thus derided by mine enemies) I am now coming to thee, and into thy hands I commit my departing spirit, depositing it with thee as a sacred trust, which I am confident thou wilt receive and keep. And when he had said thus, declining his head, he voluntarily dismissed, or delivered up his spirit, and expired.* Thus it does plainly appear, that the doctrine of the Atonement is a Scripture doctrine, clearly understood as such by all the Evangelists and Apostles, most fully and amply asserted by St. Paul in particular; and that Christ, the Antitype of all the ancient Jewish sacrifices, is a vicarious sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Christ suffered,

* Doddridge.

lest

lest mankind, who, by their sins, were become obnoxious to the divine justice, should perish everlastingly.

I would wish now to say a few words on the resurrection of our Saviour, and conclude. Modern objectors, who deny the divinity, incarnation, and atonement of Christ, confess, "that this grand pillar of our faith "(the resurrection) rests on the broadest, "firmest basis of truth and certainty.* Granted that its authenticity is undoubted, its reality indisputable; the number of witnesses, the simplicity and evident credibility of the story convincing; that the pains which the Jews took to detect a falsehood, established a truth; yet let it be observed, that this "grand pillar" is built on no other foundation, than that which supports the other mysterious truths insisted upon by the Christian Church, and is equally hard to be con-

* Vide Stone's Visitation Sermon.

ceived by human reason. That our Saviour rose again, with that identical body which suffered death upon the cross, is evident, from the incredulity of St. Thomas, who put his finger into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into his side; from Christ's partaking of the usual food which nourishes and sustains the human body; from his desiring his Disciples to handle him, and to see, for that a spirit had not flesh and bones, as they might see that he had. But how, in the fact of his ascension, this mortal could put on immortality? How this body, commonly perishable, could inhabit eternity? How flesh and blood could inherit the kingdom of God; in other words, how this corruption could put on incorruption? is as little to be justified by human reason, and is as great a miracle, as great an alteration of the common course of natural events, as the profoundest mystery of our religion: besides,

even

even in this circumstance, the divine power of Christ is manifested; "Destroy this tem-"ple, (he spake of the temple of the body) "and in three days I will raise it up again."* If we take a pleasure, as we ought to do, in the study of the Scripture, and carefully examine and compare its several parts, we shall find sufficient proofs to support and justify every article of our faith. The ancient Jews, who certainly understood their own language, and sacred records, agreed in the assurance and certainty of a Messiah, allowed that he was to be a divine person; this has been shewn to be the acknowledged belief of the Jewish Church;† they have also been convinced of a plurality of persons in the Godhead.‡ The fulfilment of the prophecies, in every part of the Evangelical History, re-

* John ii. 19.

† Allix.

‡ In the 19th chapter of Genesis, the *Elohim* are three persons; yet Lot says, "To them, my Lord."

specting the person of Christ, evince, beyond contradiction, the extraordinary interference of a superintending power; particularly, that the decree of Augustus Cæsar should have been past at so critical a time, as to accord with the birth of Christ, and make good the prophecy of Hosea; and that the sepulchre of Joseph should be new, complete, and ready to receive his body, thus fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah.

My reasons for laying these discourses before the public, I hope and trust will be attributed to their true motive, an earnest desire of doing good. I most sincerely disclaim every vain-glorious sensation, every ostentatious display of personal merit; even the hope of being useful, is damped by the fear of being mistaken, or inefficient: but allow me to enter my protest even against my own errors; if I am weak, the cause itself is strong, and needs not the feeble aid of human

human learning and abilities to support it; the hand of God will still continue to protect and advance it. "God is faithful who has "promised,"* and he has said of the Son, "That he will establish the throne of his "kingdom for ever."† May all the subjects of that kingdom be united in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life; may they all become the sheep of one fold, under one shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ.

* Heb. x. 23. † 2 Sam. vii. 13.

OCCASIONAL SERMONS.

SERMON I.

[Preached to a Benefit Club, in 1790.]

2 THESS. iii. 11, 12.

For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy bodies. Now them that are such, we command and exhort, by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

I shall make use of the present occasion, in exhorting all here present to shun certain prevalent vices, which are equally detrimental to individuals, as to society; and in endeavouring to enforce, on the other hand, the opposite virtues, which will infallibly promote private happiness, as well as public peace and harmony.

The

The first, but too common, fault among mankind, is a restless and discontented temper, which looks with a keen and an envious eye at all the enjoyments of another's situation, wilfully blind to every comfort of its own, arraigning, at one and the same time, the dispensations of Divine Providence, and the distribution of human justice. The progress of this ambitious discontent, has been wonderfully increased and accelerated, of late, by certain insidious and fallacious writings, industriously spread among the common people, the poison concealed in which, being wrapt up in plausible and popular arguments, tends to deceive uncultivated minds, and to render them unsettled and unhappy. It is clearly the design of Providence, and according to the nature of man, that high and low, rich and poor, should meet together in the same society: there is no law, divine or human, which prevents the rich man from becoming

becoming poor, or the poor man from becoming rich; excess of luxury and expence, will reduce the possessions of the one, and superior skill and labour will increase the property of the other. How constantly do we see the skilful artist, the ingenious mechanic, and the industrious husbandman, emerging from obscurity, to wealth and distinction. If property were not unexceptionably secured, when it is acquired, who would endeavour to acquire it? Our country would be filled with none but idle and rapacious members, every man's hand would be raised against his neighbour, we should be a nation of robbers, instead of peaceable and well-regulated citizens; and the same argument which goes so far *at first*, as to lessen a great deal of property, would soon be made use of, to divide a very small quantity indeed. The same envy which at first could not brook the sight of one far superior in wealth,

would

would in a short time urge us to bear no superior at all. The fatal consequences of such ideas are so evident to reflection, that I shall enlarge on them no further; they would clearly occasion the destruction of all private persons, and the dissolution of all public society. How much truer proof of friendship is it, to point out to the poor the advantages they possess, and to shew them the obligations they are under to Providence and to their country. First, by reputation they are secure of employment, by employment they are certain of food and raiment, they are removed from the snares of luxury, and the dangerous temptations which indolence and wealth produce; they are less liable to misfortunes, to the dreadful reverses of fortune, more especially to the falling from opulence to poverty. The rich are afflicted with many diseases, of which the poor are totally ignorant. Strength of body, and fitness

ness, for labour, are better than bequeathing to children, riches which they may misuse; education and learning, render the feelings but the more acute to those sufferings, occasioned by the unavoidable calamities of life; reputation, temperance, and honesty, are a poor man's irresistible claims to employment; and lastly, if neither temperance will secure him health, nor industry subsistence, he is provided for by the just, humane, and equitable laws of his country; his humble station is never deemed by the legislature as below its notice; magistrates are every where appointed, to protect and to relieve him; discontent, like the thirst occasioned by disease, increases by being gratified, so far from giving men the possession of what they have not, it takes away even the enjoyment of what they actually have. Persons of this stamp are envious, peevish, and given to slander, or, as the Apostle says, "they walk

"about disorderly, working not at all, but "are busy bodies."

The next prevailing vice which I shall notice, is the custom of prophane and rash swearing. This arises from two sources, ill habit, and passion. In the first instance, it is caught insensibly from our companions, and oftentimes from our superiors, who are not aware of the mischief they do, by setting so bad an example. Let us consider a moment the folly and the guilt of such a practice. It is extremely daring, and prophane, to be continually calling God as a witness to the most insignificant and impertinent matters; to make use of his sacred name in every silly story or frivolous dispute: nothing tends so much as this to take off from the mind of man, that reverential awe which he ought at all times to feel for his maker; nothing leads him sooner into falsehood and perjury; in vain he pleads bad habit for it,

and

and unconsciousness of doing it, for the most trifling exertion would soon enable him to discard it. So much for rash swearing; but the second species of it is of a much deeper dye—execration occasioned by passion, the calling down curses and damnation upon our brethren, from that very God of whose mercy we ourselves stand so much in need, which you may hear done in our public streets every hour of the day. Now if these imprecations have any meaning, or are spoken with any real design, they betray a malevolence of heart too shocking to think of, not merely in a Christian, but in the lowest human creature; and if they come from no serious or settled design in the speaker, they are still chargeable, in an extreme degree, with the character of that idle, that horridly foolish, and daring impiety, already mentioned. "He that delighteth in cursing, it shall "come unto him," says the Psalmist; the

curses shall by no means injure the person against whom they are uttered; but shall rebound back upon the head of the utterer. It becomes the bringers up of youth, their parents in particular, to guard them with all possible care against the danger of contracting this wretched habit, which, like most others, has its foundation laid in the early part of life; indeed the prophanation of their Maker's name, seems to have grown up with some young creatures almost from their infancy, and to have been nearly the first language they learnt to pronounce. Bad words naturally give birth to bad thoughts in youthful minds, and bad thoughts as naturally lead to bad behaviour; let parents, then, take every method to prevent the beginning of the shameful practice under consideration, by their good advice, their good instruction, and, above all, by never setting their children the example of it; by being discreet

and

and virtuous in their conversation, as well as in their actions, before the people that are continually with them, who must see and hear every thing they do or speak. I enlarge the more fully on this subject, because its malignity does not seem sufficiently striking; it does not occur to those who are guilty of it, that in the earliest period of time, God has forbidden it by an express commandment in the Mosaic law, in the same manner as he did both theft and murder, and that our Saviour, in his very first sermon, says, "Ye have heard that it hath been said by "them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear "thyself, but shall perform unto the Lord "thine oaths; but I say unto you, swear not "at all, neither by Heaven, for it is God's "throne, nor by the earth, for it is his foot-"stool, but let your communication be yea "yea, nay nay, for whatsoever is more "than these, cometh of evil." Accustom

yourselves to an uniform integrity in your dealings, and truth in your words, that you may not be tempted to have recourse to these offensive invocations of your God, or of any other evidence, real or imaginary; which invocations, by the way, will never strengthen, but will evermore weaken and sink your credit. On the opposite hand, the plain word of an honest man, seriously spoken, is as valid, and will go as far amongst all that know him, as his bond or his oath. For many vices, men may pretend to plead constitutional infirmity, but that can never be urged in the present instance; "above all things, "therefore, my brethren, swear not."

The next vice which I shall most seriously exhort you to shun, is that of intemperance. The evils arising from excessive drinking, are attended with such a train of fatal consequences, that they ought to be laid before you in the fullest and most serious manner. The first I

shall

mention, is loss of reputation. There is no man, however high or low his situation, but what has some charge of importance or other committed to his care, some business to manage, for himself or others, which requires his utmost skill and abilities to perform. Human reason is oftentimes insufficient, even with study and thoughtfulness, to discharge this trust to its full perfection, how then will it be executed as it ought to be by those who weaken and drown their reason in frequent intoxication? who can place a confidence in, who will employ, such a person, who, so far from being competent to the management of another's affairs, cannot even take care of himself? The next ill consequence of this vice, is loss of health; without health we can neither enjoy riches, nor power, nor honour, all the pleasures, all the luxuries of life, lose their relish without this blessing. Now health is most likely to be secured by temperance;

joice the heart of man, to renovate and support his strength; but when we use them to excess, they weaken and destroy it. Let us observe, in this instance, the advantage of instinct over misapplied reason, in the conduct of the brutes; no gentle methods can persuade them, no harsh measures can force them, to drink more than suffices for the refreshment of their nature, and the abatement of their thirst; the consequence therefore of this groveling vice is, that it degrades us below the level of the brute creation. If we ask those addicted to inebriety, what are the chief inducements to it, they will tell us, mirth and pleasure; but surely here is some mistake, for the moment any one becomes intoxicated, the ability he possesses for merriment is gone, his senses and wit are lost; he may, indeed, occasion the mirth which an ideot does, he may become the laughing-stock of the ignorant and unfeeling, but

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he must occasion pain to the ingenuous and considerate. Now let us investigate and search into the pleasures of excessive drinking. Pleasure is the opposite of pain; but sickness, and a sense of having done what is wrong, are painful, and nothing in the nature of things can make them pleasurable, or even satisfactory. Sorry I am to say, that the higher classes of society, whose education should place them above sensual gratifications, and whose tables afford the daily banquet, often set a bad example to the lower, in this respect. All of us should take to ourselves the word of exhortation, to be upon our guard in this case; and one thing more I must take the liberty to mention, is, that as this luxury used to excess, is the rich man's poison, so a part of its superfluity, administered with a judicious hand, is the poor man's medicine.

Having expatiated thus far on these three prevailing vices, it remains for me now only,

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in a few words, to recommend the practice of the opposite virtues. And first, of content, under which head I would wish to comprise gratitude for good, resignation to evil, cheerfulness, a disposition to make good permanent, and bad better, not to make bad worse; I would wish to mean by it, all the social virtues, the humane justice of the parent and of the master; the fidelity, integrity, and attachment due from the child and the servant; the respect from the inferior, so necessary to the well being of society; the condescension of the superior, so becoming to himself; and the just goodwill of the equal. As we are none of us allowed to chuse our situations, let us humbly acquiesce in the condition in which Providence has placed us; let us consider that our eternal happiness will depend, not upon our station here, but on the manner in which we have discharged the duties of it; that from those to whom much is given,

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much will be required; from those to whom little, an increase only proportionable; but the man who receives only one talent, has no right to bury it in the ground; that is, that all have some duties to perform, and will find their happiness in the contented and punctual discharge of them.

Secondly, let every person strive to keep a watch over the door of his lips, "let him re-" frain his tongue from evil, and his lips that " they speak no guile;" let him seriously consider the immense power, the extensive wisdom and knowledge, the manifold mercies, of God; let him keep up in his mind, an awful reverence, and impressive sense, of the almighty majesty of the Supreme Being; let him endeavour to acquire a character of unshaken veracity; let him remember the denunciation of our blessed master, "I say " unto ye, that every idle word which men " shall speak, they shall give an account " thereof

" thereof in the Day of Judgement; for by " thy words (as well as by thy actions) thou " shalt be justified, and by thy words thou " shalt be condemned."

Lastly, let us practice sobriety in its most comprehensive sense, whether it means Chastity, the restraint of sinful and unruly passions, which grow stronger by indulgence, or an abstinence from every excess and luxury which may injure a man's mind, his health, or his reputation. A poor man, indeed, earns his livelihood by his labour, if therefore he weakens his strength by drunkenness, he throws away his own subsistence, and defrauds the charity of his country. The life of man has its rise, its crisis, and its decline; if the first is intemperate, the second will be short and imperfect, and the third premature, long, and painful. And here I cannot but justly and sincerely applaud such societies as this before me; the acquirements of the flower

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of youth, and of the complete strength of manhood, are wisely employed by it to provide for the uncertain period of sickness, and the certain infirmities of old age: I behold in its members a spirit of independence, justly entitled to praise, and highly deserving of encouragement; a determination "to do "their work in quietness and to eat their "*own* bread, not to walk about disorderly, "working not at all, as busy bodies;" to which commendation I may also add, that I have been well assured that its meetings are, and I trust ever will be, conducted with a temperance, regularity, and harmony, which must continue to reflect the greatest honour alike on the patrons who protect it, on the managers who direct it, and on the members who compose it.

SERMON II.

[Preached at Painswick, 1807, for the Benefit of the Sunday Schools,]

PSALM LXXVIII. 7, 8.

To the intent that when they came up, they might teach their children the same; that they might put their trust in God, and not to forget the works of God, but to keep his Commandments.

THE royal Author, in the psalm from whence the text is taken, recapitulates at considerable length, the several wonderful interpositions of Almighty Power, in favour of his chosen people, the ungrateful returns they made, their infidelity and continual distrust of his good providence, and the signal punishment he inflicted on their manifold transgressions. He exhorts them to consider these

these things most attentively, to make themselves well acquainted with his law, and to teach it sedulously to their children, that they might not resemble their forefathers in such ill conduct. "He made a covenant "with Jacob, and gave Israel a law, which "he commanded our forefathers to teach "their children; that their posterity might "know it, and the children which were yet "unborn; to the intent that when they also "were grown up, they might shew their "children the same, that they might put "their trust in God, and not to forget the "works of God, but to keep his command-"ments;" "and not to be as their forefa-"thers, a faithless and stubborn generation, "a generation who set not their heart aright, "and whose spirit cleaveth not stedfastly "unto God."

Amongst all the important duties of life, certainly there is no one of higher con-

sequence, than the right education of children. Those to whom that serious charge is committed, should be well aware of what they have undertaken, and of the particular attention and steadiness requisite, that neither weak indulgence may encourage the seeds of vice and passion, nor over-strict severity destroy the rising virtues, depress a manly energy of mind, nor smother, under dread, the modesty of genius. The management of different tempers, will call forth all the skill and patience of the teachers, to raise the timid and to awe the bold; this, therefore, must be their peculiar care, as they will answer it to God, and to their country. But in order to proceed systematically, and fully, upon this important subject, I shall divide my discourse into two parts.

Under the first, I shall comprise the duty of parents and instructors to children; under the second, that of children to their parents,

rents, and to all those who are placed in authority over them.

The first grand point in the education of youth, is the inculcation of religious principles; "to bring them up in the fear and "nurture of the Lord," or, as the text expresses, "that they may put their trust in "God, and not to forget the works of God, "but to keep his commandments;" to imprint upon their minds, the over-ruling providence, and constant presence, of an Almighty, all-wise, and just Being, who is ever witness to every part of their conduct, who will bring every counsel and every secret work into judgment, whether it be good, or whether it be evil, and who will most certainly, finally reward and punish the actions of mankind. Further, let them be properly grounded in all the rudiments of the Christian religion, enforce their attendance on, and their attention to, the Christian church; they will

soon acquire a love of that duty, as a religious habit, and, if proper care be taken to confirm them well, and inform them thoroughly, in the faith of Christ, they will ever continue steady members of his holy communion; "when they are old, they will not de-"part from it," their minds will neither be unsettled by the sophistry of the unbeliever, nor their morals corrupted by the example of the prophane.

The second branch of instruction for young persons, should contain their duty to their neighbour, and to themselves. Every such one should be taught, that his own particular happiness is closely interwoven with that of society, or in other words, with that of the persons about him. Bad subjects disturb the government under which they live, and introduce public confusion and turbulence, which must ultimately fall on their own heads: as bad subjects in the gross, destroy the

the public peace, so bad men, individually, interrupt the happiness, and ruin the comforts, of private life. Idleness, debauchery, and ungoverned passions, naturally lead to beggary, sickness, and domestic misery; how essentially necessary, therefore, it is, to imbue the infant mind with the strongest impressions of honour and of justice, more especially to remember, on all occasions, that sacred rule of Christianity, "the doing to "others as they would wish to be done by "themselves;" to practise truth and candour in all their words, honesty and integrity in all their actions. The duties they owe to themselves are, temperance, sobriety, the restraint of every angry revengeful passion; frugality, care, and industry, in their worldly affairs; contentment of mind, a patient acquiescence in that state of life in which it has pleased God to place them: let them consider, it is not how high a rank they

fill, but the manner in which they fill it, that will render them acceptable in his sight. The benefits which arise from the proper education, and careful instruction of female infants, must be more especially evident to us, if we reflect how much the happiness of domestic life depends upon the good conduct of that sex, and what extensive misery arises from its indiscretion: as the dutiful daughter, the faithful wife, the exemplary mother, are essential ingredients in the compound of human felicity, so the reverse of these characters do not confine the sufferings of guilt and evil to themselves; here the innocent suffer for the guilty, and children yet unborn are involved in the cloud of maternal infamy. To what, but to a neglect of religious education, can we impute the present deplorable profligacy and ignorance of some of the lower orders of society; every public institution therefore of the kind, whether it be a Sunday

day or a weekly school, reflects honour on its promoters, and is a national benefit. Young females should also think a little more for themselves; as all of them naturally wish to settle, and establish themselves in the world, of what an inestimable advantage to them is a good character; in single life, it is their only dependance for bread, and an unblemished reputation is most commonly the first inducement to domestic union, even with the poorest of mankind; it should therefore be their pride, to look forward towards supporting, with honour and credit, the most respectable situations of virtuous wives and attentive mothers, and not to expose themselves to public disgrace, and become the authors of neglected and deserted children, whom they must consider as a curse, and not a blessing.

Another grand duty of all instructors should be, to set a good example to those placed beneath their care, to put a proper

guard upon all their words and actions: I do not mean by this, that they are to practise unbending austerity, or canting hypocrisy; it is necessary for them not only to seem prudent, wise, and good, but to be so in reality; it is a duty they owe, not only to those into whom good principles and good manners are to be instilled, but even to themselves. Attentive observers of human nature can but remark, how strong and how quick the habit of imitation is in young minds: before the reason is sufficiently mature, it will not discriminate over nicely, between what is seemingly right, and what is actually wrong; and we frequently see the child the copy of its parent, even in erroneous opinions and faulty practice; surely, therefore, the regard we all profess to feel for the welfare of our children, should induce us to scrutinize our own conduct with impartiality, to correct, or at all events to conceal, our vices from them, and

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even to point out the danger of such habits, though at the same time we are conscious that we censure ourselves. Reproof, advice, admonition, come but with an ill grace, unless they are promoted by good example; as the eloquent apostle says, addressing himself to those Jews who boasted they were fully instructed by the law of Moses, "Thou which "teachest another, teachest thou not thy- "self? Thou that preachest a man should "not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest "a man should not commit adultery, dost "thou commit adultery?"* Even so it is in all cases; words are soon spoken, aud professions are easily made, but good deeds alone are the only genuine proofs of religious principles, and inward goodness of heart. "Be- "ware of false prophets, (says our Saviour) "which come to you in sheep's clothing, but "inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye

* Rom. ii. 21.

"shall

"shall know them by their fruits. Do men "gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? "Even so every good tree bringeth forth "good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth "evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth "evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring "forth good fruit. Wherefore by their "fruits ye shall know them."* Ye shall easily perceive who are the best instructors; those who practise themselves, the good conduct, and the virtues, which they recommend to others.

Let us now, secondly, endeavour to set forth the duty of children to their parents, and to all those who are placed in authority over them. The heathen nations of antiquity, esteemed piety to parents as next in merit to the worship of the Gods, and marked with the strongest stigma of abhorrence, a cruel and unfeeling behaviour towards them.

* Matthew vii. 16.

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The law of Moses strongly inculcates this duty; instances of it are frequent in the Old Testament, of which no one is more affecting than the conduct of Joseph. The writings of Solomon, the wisest of mankind, abound in such exhortations: "My son, (says he) hear "the instruction of thy father, and forsake "not the law of thy mother." He gives honour to his father, for the care of his education, and for instructing him in true wisdom. Our blessed Saviour affords a strong example of the most meritorious obedience and affection to his parents; even he, the Son of God, soon after his coming into the world, "was subject unto them;" and just before his leaving the world, he provided for his afflicted and distressed mother, by placing her under the protection of his amiable and beloved disciple. He said to his mother, "Woman," or (as the refinement of modern language would render the word in the most respectful

respectful terms, for it is the same in which Augustus Cæsar addressed the Queen of Egypt), "Madam, behold thy Son;" he will be to thee, in that capacity, as a protector and near relation: and immediately that disciple took her to his own house. He also severely rebukes the cruelty and hypocrisy of the Jews, in finding excuses to evade the discharge of this duty. Christ says to the Scribes and Pharisees, "Why do ye trans-"gress the commandment of God by your "tradition? for God commanded saying, Ho-"nour thy father and thy mother. He that "curseth father or mother, let him die the "death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to "his father or mother, it is a gift, by whatso-"ever thou mightest be profited by me, and "honour not his father or his mother, he shall "be free."* The meaning of which passage is as follows: The commandment of God

* Matthew xv. 3.

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in the second table of Moses, has enjoined you to honour your father and mother; which means, amongst other things, to relieve and assist them: but you presume to say, that if that sum, which should enable you to relieve the wants of your parents, be laid upon the altar, as an offering in the temple, you may justly plead that you cannot afford such assistance, and that you have put it out of your power, by a meritorious act of religion, to do any thing for them. My positive command, says the Almighty, is to honour your father and your mother; I have said, "I will have "mercy and not sacrifice;" the traditions of men have falsely taught you otherwise, they have furnished you with an excuse to neglect an indispensable obligation, and to leave the authors of your being to beggary and contempt. The most essential duty, therefore, of children is, undoubtedly, piety to their parents; and this word must be taken

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in a most extensive sense, it must include love and reverence for their persons, a dutiful submission to their commands, a close attention to, and a strict observance of, their injunctions and advice: "Children, obey "your parents in all things, (says St. Paul) "for this is well pleasing unto the Lord."* Moreover, let children shew, in a more advanced age, a strong attachment to them, and a grateful sense of the obligations they have received. Ingratitude is the basest of all immoralities; and what are the benefits we receive from others, compared to the anxieties of parental tenderness in our infancy, of right and religious education in our nonage, of provision for our riper years? Happy ought we to esteem ourselves, if we can add to the support and comfort of their old age; we are clearly fulfilling that duty, next to the service of God. Again, as all our teach-

* Col. iii. 20

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ers and governors are set over us by our parents, and receive their delegated authority, to them also must be shewn reverence, respect, and obedience; we must lend a patient and attentive ear to their advice and instruction also; we must feel a desire and emulation to excel in every laudable and useful accomplishment. As the wax must be softened, before it can be stamped with a beautiful and permanent impression, so the youthful mind must be warmed by the nobler feelings of ingenuous pride, and a desire of excellence, before it can receive with effect the lasting marks of liberal education. Let young persons duly consider, that the figure they will hereafter make in the world, that their success in their several situations, must depend greatly upon themselves, upon the exertions of their early years; they must not fail to do their part, and endeavour to acquire the requisite knowledge, or skill, to labour

labour either with the head or hand; the teacher in vain may liberally sow the seeds of learning, if they fall among the thorns of idleness, or on the barren rock of sullenness or inattention: to both parties, therefore, let an earnest application of talents be recommended, that they may discharge, as Christians and as men, their public and private duties. Children ought likewise to feel a due and warm affection for other connections, and this, of course, must be proportioned to their proximity of relationship, and to the benefits and services they have rendered. Lastly, they must exercise an universal benevolence to all mankind.

Having said thus much on the subject, my address to your feelings needs be but short. As from a religious and right education, arise good members of society, affectionate fathers, dutiful children, kind masters, and faithful servants; conjugal fidelity, and female virtue;

tue; public spirit, and veneration for the laws; I hope and trust you will be ever ready to promote, both by your assistance and inspection, the schools of these parishes; the institution is so laudable, that if properly conducted and supported, it cannot fail to produce universal benefit, and highly tend moreover to your local and private interests: to the female part of my audience, more especially, let me recommend them; there is no matron here present, who has not had occasion, in her domestic arrangements, to lament either the want of general knowledge, or the profligacy of her female servants. And here I cannot help remarking, that I have heard and read, with considerable regret, the arguments of some ingenious and speculative men, against affording any species of education to the lowest order of society; for what is man without it? The mind of a child is a blank,

capable of receiving any impression that is put upon it; if it receives not good impressions, it is open to bad; it differs only from that of the brute, in its superior capability to receive instruction. What is Revelation but education? How are mankind to imbibe religious principles, the knowledge of the most simple laws of their country, but from education, from oral tradition, or written information? If the higher orders of society rise to wealth, distinction, and deserved applause, by the cultivation and exertion of superior talents, and laborious learning, shall we shut the book of knowledge against the poor? But whilst I argue for the diffusion of instruction, let me not be misunderstood; I would not have it extended too far; what is excellent in the lesser degree, is faulty if carried to the extreme; that education should go no further than to the inculcation of religious

gious principles and duties, of social and relative obligations; not that which will lift them into the heights of dangerous ambition, or bewilder them in the labyrinths of casuistry and speculation, but what will fit them more advantageously, for commercial or agricultural situations, to which they may, without harm, aspire, and which ought to be open to their industry and application. In a word, the acquirement of reading, writing, and arithmetic is sufficient.

To conclude, let them all be taught to remember their Creator in the days of their youth; to love, honour, and serve God; to venerate and obey their parents; to pay a due submission, respect, and attention, to all their teachers, and those who are set in authority over them; to be true and ingenuous in all their words and actions; to love one another; to endeavour to excel in every thing praise-

worthy; to be industrious and contented in their several stations. Thus shall they secure to themselves, success and peace of mind in this world, and everlasting happiness in that which is to come.

SERMON III.

[Preached at Cirencester, Feb. 26, 1807, being the day appointed for a General Fast.]

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2 CHRONICLES XX. 9.

If when evil cometh upon us, as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in thy presence, (for thy name is in this house,) and cry unto thee in our affliction, then thou wilt hear and help.

THE Romish Church of former times has justly incurred the censure of the historian, for its perpetual interference in the political concerns of empires. Ambition led its members to use the sacred influence of religion to establish an unjustifiable hierarchy; their misguided zeal prompted them to bestow kingdoms they never saw, and, under

the specious pretext of advancing Christianity, to encourage cruelty and persecution; witness the mad Crusades of Asia, the fanatical subjugation of America, and the political distractions of Europe, in which they took so active and so unbecoming a part. By such conduct, they seem totally to have lost sight of the example of their heavenly Master, and to have egregiously mistaken the tenets of his gospel: "My kingdom, (says our Sa-"viour,) is not of this world. If my king-"dom were of this world, then would my "servants fight, that I should not be deliver-"ed to the Jews." When the over-heated zeal of Peter urged him to draw the sword in his Master's defence, he was commanded to desist, and reasons the most convincing pointed out to him, to restrain his unnecessary impetuosity: "Thinkest thou I cannot now "pray to my father, and he shall presently "give me more than twelve legions of An-"gels?

" gels? But how then shall the Scripture be " fulfilled, that thus it must be?" He submitted, without a murmur, to injustice and arbitrary power; " he was led like a lamb " to the slaughter, and like a sheep dumb " before the shearers, so he opened not his " mouth." He leaves to his disciples the like injunctions of submission to persecution, and even to death itself: " Resist not " evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on the " right cheek, turn to him the other also." " And if any man will sue thee at the law, " and take away thy coat, let him have thy " cloak also." " And whosoever shall compel " thee to go a mile, go with him twain." When he was asked, whether it was lawful to give tribute, he clearly separates his kingdom from that of the world: " Render unto " Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and " unto God, the things which are God's." In the same manner he paid the customary

" and to cleanse us from all iniquity." I shall, therefore, in this discourse, remark, first, on the nature of private and public fasts, on the proper manner of their observance; and, secondly, bring forward a few of those examples to which I have alluded. As to the first, "The ancient Christians were " very exact in their weekly and annual " fasts. Their weekly fasts were constantly " kept on Wednesdays and Fridays, because " on the one our Lord was betrayed, and on " the other crucified. Their annual fast " was that of Lent, by way of preparation " for the feast of our Saviour's Resurrection.* These periodical fasts are too much neglected in the present day, because, if they were observed according to our Saviour's direction, they could not fail to be highly beneficial to all Christians: "When ye fast (says he), be " not as the hypocrites, of a sad counte-

* Nelson.

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"nance, for they disfigure their faces, that "they may appear unto men to fast. Verily "I say unto you, they have their reward. "But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine "head, and wash thy face, that thou appear "not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father "which is in secret; and thy father which "seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." How strongly does this oppose itself to a prevalent error of the present day, that religion and chearfulness are incompatible, that dejection and melancholy are the only proper expressions of true devotion. The man who carries into every action of life, the vital principle of religion, who studies, as far as human frailty will allow him, to observe the laws of God, to attend to the injunctions of his conscience, to repent his sins, and to act with justice and benevolence to mankind, is the only man who has a right to be happy even in this world, to convince his fellow Christians,

Christians, that the ways of righteousness are the ways of pleasantness, and that all her paths are peace. A private fast, when it is undertaken for religious ends and purposes, is intended to restrain our sensual appetites, and to bring the body under subjection to temperance and reason; to give the mind liberty and ability to consider and reflect, whilst it is actually engaged in divine service, or preparing for some solemn part of it. Half the errors and vices of mankind arise from want of reflection. A fast is moreover intended to humble ourselves before God, under a sense of our sins, and of the misery to which they expose us; to deprecate his anger, and supplicate his mercy and favour; to express displeasure at ourselves, for the abuse of those good things God allows us to enjoy, and of which we have made ourselves unworthy by sinful excesses; above all, to render it acceptable to God, it should be accompanied

companied with fervent prayer, and a charitable relief of the poor, whose miseries we may better guess at, when we are bearing some of the inconveniencies of hunger.*

Secondly. When we revert to instances of public fasts, upon solemn and particular occasions, we find many examples: and first, that of Moses, who, before he delivered the law of the two tables to the Jews, fasted forty days and forty nights. Next, that of Elias, the great restorer of the law, who fasted for the same space of time. And thirdly, that of our Saviour, who, preparatory to the promulgation of his divine commission (the new law or covenant), abode in the wilderness of Judea forty days and forty nights, and did neither eat bread nor drink water. Instances of fasts on other occasions, to deprecate the wrath of God for national sins, and to implore protection from

* Nelson.

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our enemies, are numerous in the Old Testament. The first example we have among the Jews, is that of Jehosophat, who being told that a vast multitude was coming against him, greatly too powerful, as he conceived, for him to oppose successfully, sat himself to ask help of the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judea. When the people were assembled, he addressed this most beautiful oration to the Lord of Hosts: "O Lord "God of our fathers, art not thou God in "Heaven, and rulest thou not over all the "kingdoms of the Heathen? And in thine "hand is there not power and might, so that "none is able to withstand thee? Art not "thou our God, who didst drive out the in-"habitants of this land before thy people "Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abra-"ham (thy friend), for ever? And they "dwelt therein, and have built thee a sanctu-"ary therein, for thy name, saying, If when

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"evil cometh upon us, as the sword, judge-
"ment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand
"before this house, and in thy presence, (for
"thy name is in this house) and cry unto
"thee in our affliction; then thou wilt hear
"and help. We have no might against this
"great company that cometh against us,
"neither know we what to do, but our eyes
"are upon thee." The Almighty was pleased with this fast, this address, and this dependance, and answered, "Be not afraid,
"nor dismayed, by reason of this great mul-
"titude, for the battle is not yours, but
"God's." "And the Lord set ambush-
"ments against the enemy, and they cut
"one another in pieces." The next account we have of this kind of public fast, is in the ninth chapter of Nehemiah, where he gratefully recapitulates the several blessings which God had showered down on the Israelites, and implores his protection and as-

sistance against the number of their foes. The fast of the Ninevites, to avert a dreadful and impending calamity, the manner in which it was kept, the good effect that general or individual repentance produces, is well known; for God, as the prophet Isaiah observes, saw *their works*, that they turned from their evil way, and he did not the evil which he intended against them. The last instance which I shall mention from the Scripture, is taken from the fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah, and I shall enlarge upon this the more fully, as it points out exactly what a fast should be. The Almighty is represented, as expostulating with the Jews for their hypocrisy and unreligious formalities; forms containing the surface or resemblance of piety, but totally destitute of the essential part, and vital principle of religion. "Cry "aloud (says he to his prophet), spare not, "lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew

"my

" my people their transgressions, and the
" house of Jacob their sins: yet they pretend
" to seek me daily, and to delight to know
" my ways, as a nation that did righteous-
" ness, and hath not forsaken the ordinance
" of their God. They continually enquire
" of me, concerning the ordinances of righte-
" ousness; they take delight to draw nigh
" unto God. Wherefore have we fasted,
" and thou seest not? Have we afflicted
" our souls, and thou dost not regard? Be-
" hold (rejoins the Almighty), in the day of
" your fasting ye enjoy your pleasure, *and*
" *all your demands of labour ye rigorously*
" *exact.* Behold ye fast for strife and con-
" tention, and to smite with the fist the
" poor. Wherefore fast ye unto me in this
" manner, to make your voice to be heard on
" high? Is such then the fast which I choose,
" that a man should afflict his soul for a day?
" Is it that he should bow down his head like

" a bulrush, and spread sackcloth and ashes " for his bed? Shall this be called a fast, " and a day acceptable to Jehovah? Is not " this the fast I choose—to dissolve the bands " of wickedness, to unloose the oppressive " burdens, to deliver those that are crushed " by violence, and that ye should break " asunder every yoke? Is it not to distri- " bute bread to the hungry, and to bring the " wandering poor into thine house; when " thou seest the naked, that thou clothe him, " and that thou hide not thyself from thine " own flesh?" Inspired and energetic language, to which all modern composition is but as sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal! From this expostulation it is evident, that a true fast consists in deeds of virtue, and in acts of mercy, to dissolve the bands of wickedness, to clothe the naked, and distribute bread to the hungry; without this, it is in vain to put on the exterior of religion, or to assume

assume the mask of momentary dejection. To render ourselves truly acceptable to God, upon this, as upon all other occasions, we must be careful to maintain good works. "Yea a man may say (exclaims St. James), "thou hast faith, and I have works; shew "me thy faith without thy works, and I will "shew thee my faith by my works." The semblance of religion is of little worth, without the substance; or, in the all-wise language of the Son of God, which ought to be uppermost in every Christian mind, "Not "every one that sayeth unto me, Lord, Lord, "shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven, "but he that doeth the will of my Father, "who is in Heaven.

But whilst we are imploring the protection of God, to shield us from our enemies, and his divine assistance to lead us forth to victory, let us not forget at the same time to return him our unfeigned thanks for having

placed us in such a situation, as to render us strangers to the horrors of war. Whilst other nations are overwhelmed and swallowed up in the torrent of unbridled conquest; whilst the inhabitants of other countries are trodden under the foot of the licentious soldier, accustomed to pillage and to bloodshed, insulted, stripped of honour and subsistence, or fugitives from their native land; we feel, through the infinite mercy of God, no other than pecuniary inconvenience. To the valour, fortitude, the national energy, of this land of freedom, history bears the most honourable testimony; nor do we at present entertain a doubt, that all its ancient glory (under Providence) will still be preserved. But what can the most desperate courage avail against numbers so superior? Had not the Almighty placed between us and our enemy, those almost insurmountable barriers, the ocean, and our victorious fleets, who shall

say

say we might not, at this very moment, swell the enormous list of foreign conquests? To the gracious protection of that Omnipotent Being, we must recommend the continued safety of our national bulwark, and study, by every exercise of public as well as individual goodness, to deserve his favour. Further, let us pray for those who are now suffering under his afflicting hand, in other countries; that they may, ere long, enjoy the comforts of their native land, in the return of victory and peace. The present conqueror of Europe has (doubtless for reasons inscrutable to us) enjoyed an unexampled flood of prosperity; he has been allowed to swallow up and annihilate the kingdoms around him. Whatever we may think of him, we must not presume to call down fire from Heaven to stop his course, or dictate to the Divine Director of all Events, in his government of the world; let us remember, there is a future

tribunal, and a Judge, before whom the mightiest Potentate on earth may well tremble. This Comet will have his period; the same hand which has raised him to this pinnacle of greatness, can dash him in a moment from the summit of his glory, deprive him of his power, his kingdom, and his life. How frail is the dependance of that monarch, who exists by popular opinion, whose throne is supported by dread, and not by justice; he is in perpetual danger, from the cabals of the powerful, the murmurs of ungratified ambition, the dagger of the enthusiast, the traitor, and the assassin. The fever of ambition may be pleasing for awhile, but it preys upon itself, it corrodes and burns up its possessor; the couch of peace and virtue is but ill exchanged for the throne of usurpation, and tyrannic power; happy alone is that Prince, who reigns an example of piety and wisdom, by the wishes, not by the fears of his subjects.

To

To conclude. Let us evince, both nationally and individually, not merely for this particular day, but at all times, and on all occasions, a sense of religion and a love of our country: towards God, let us feel the utmost devotion and humility; towards men, universal charity, benevolence, and forgiveness of injuries; at the same time, when necessary, the most fearless intrepidity. If God be for us, it matters not who can be against us. Our blessed Redeemer himself has exhorted us "not to fear them who kill "the body, but to fear him only who can "destroy both body and soul in hell."

SERMON IV.

[Intended for an Assize Sermon, preached 1791.]

JOHN I. 17.

For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

IT will, I think, appear evident to every reflecting mind, that man, at his first creation, could not have occasion for many laws, for laws imply the relative rights of man in society; but as where there is no law, there is no sin, (for sin, according to Scripture, is the transgression of the law) and where, as a free agent, man must have a power to do wrong, or no merit in doing right, it became indispensably necessary he should have some law;

law; that law therefore was simply obedience to his Maker. "Of the tree in the midst of "the garden, thou shalt not eat." The thing commanded was not material, the command itself was solemn, serious, and important; the Lawgiver was a monarch not only of absolute power, but of unerring wisdom; his command was easy, and it ought to have been obeyed; but our progenitor transgressed the law, and we now proceed to consider man as neither individual nor innocent.

When the earth, however, first began to be peopled by his descendants, so few were still its possessors, that property was naturally of small value. "In the sweat of thy "brow shalt thou eat bread." The utmost industry and exertion of each were requisite to supply himself with food; we may therefore suppose that every man took what space of ground he wanted, undisturbed by the encroachments of another. Property thus low

of

of value, all men seemed *equal;* no struggles for superior extent of territory could be necessary for those, who, if they sighed for greater possessions, had only to put forth their hands and take them.

But were man thus *originally equal*, they could not long continue so. Some undoubtedly were virtuous, industrious, frugal, and temperate; others wicked, lazy, wasteful, and intemperate. When these latter therefore had neglected or squandered away the means of their subsistence; when the increase of numbers, and extended population, had raised the value of property, by increasing the demand for it; when, lastly, their own habits of indolence or debauchery had rendered them averse to, or unfit for, bodily toil, they became naturally not only poor and dependant, (for they had nothing to barter for food but labour) but, profuse of their own, greedy of the possessions of others:

like

like beasts of prey, they sought subsistence by rapine.

Nor did one dictate of revealed religion attempt to counteract the first law of nature, self-preservation, or to prevent the *weak* and the *just* from forming themselves into societies, and framing regulations, to protect themselves from the injuries of the *strong* and the *unjust*. Regulations, framed with coolness, deliberation, and caution at the first, established by consent of the majority of wise and good men, and by long experience of their utility, are called *laws*: nor are these necessary to the *good* alone, but also to the *bad*.

Without an adherence to some laws, not even thieves can preserve society: bands of robbers have found it necessary to be invincibly true one to another, and just in the distribution of their plunder; if not, the band is broken, and their attacks, by being single

single and unsupported, are rendered but the more dangerous to themselves; not to mention the angry passions and treacheries that ever arise from disappointed confidence, which must dissolve societies, whether good or bad. These, therefore, pretend to submit to laws of HONOUR even in deeds of DISHONOUR, and find the necessity of JUSTICE in the very commission of INJUSTICE.

Mankind are no longer to be considered in an individual state; all find the necessity of uniting to supply their mutual wants, and to have their mutual weaknesses protected. For protection, they are bound to repay obedience; and those writers who would bring them back to a state of nature, are certainly deceived themselves, or have some selfish end in deceiving others, and should be treated, not as the friends, but as the enemies of liberty. Unqualified liberty is contrary to reason and justice, for the enjoyment of our

own

own rights is qualified with this proviso, that we do not infringe the rights of others. According to the design of the Creator of the Universe, property is acquired by skill or labour, and lost by weakness or indolence; and, according to human reason, and natural justice, property fairly acquired, must be quietly possessed, may be disposed of according to the will of the possessor, and when acquired by the father, must not be wrested from the son. "Every individual feels "that he has an exclusive right to possess "or to alienate whatever he has acquired by "his own labour and dexterity,"* for none would endeavour to gain property, if they could not both possess it absolutely, and dispose of it at pleasure. The peasant is concerned in the confirmation of this truth, in like manner as the prince, for in a new and arbitrary distribution of property, he might, by a parity of argument, be obliged to share the

* Robertson.

little

little he has with the indolent and lawless who have nothing. None of the gainers in this case would deserve what they got, and all the losers would be absolutely robbed; for what can robbery be defined, but the act of taking away, by force, contrary to the will of another, and without giving an equivalent, his property.* From this concise and primary view of the natural necessity of laws, let us consider the excellency of those which the Almighty gave to the Jews by his servant Moses, and of those which his infinite goodness was pleased further to bestow upon mankind by his Son Jesus Christ.

* Men are not even born equal; they are unequal in bodily strength; and if they were to depend upon the mere cultivation of the earth for subsistence, the stronger would soon become possessed of greater property than the weaker.

Every man is anxious to be protected in the rights appropriate to his station; and not only bodily possessions, but those of learning and rank, upon which the possessor sets his own value, should not be torn from him, for in this case we contradict flatly the law of Christ: "Do unto all "men as ye would they should do unto you." We say, *we* will enjoy *our* rights, but *you* shall not enjoy *yours*.

The

The detail of truth so uniformly observed in that authentic book, the Bible, rendered it necessary to represent the Jews as they really were, rebellious and ungrateful; though they were the people of God, the nation wherein idolatry was the least practised, they were fallen men; and if we find these bad qualities still existing among Christians of the present day, we ought the less to wonder at perceiving them among those, who had not yet the benefit of that grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ. Strange as it may appear, scarce delivered as the Jews were from the most cruel slavery, with all the wonders of Almighty God fresh in their minds, they paid their adoration to a senseless image, the work of their own hands: in aggravation of such absurd impiety, it was the very idol of their unjust tyrants, the golden calf being nothing less than the representation of the Egyptian God (Apis, Se-

rapis, or Osiris), whom they worshipped under the figure of a young ox. To govern such a people as this, nothing less than laws dictated by eternal wisdom, and their obedience inforced by threats of national as well as personal destruction, could suffice. In remarking upon these Commandments, we shall clearly find their use extended to the present age, and we might perhaps prove them also the grand basis of all national laws, however distorted by the pride, the passions, or the idolatry of mankind.*

The

* We are justified in this supposition by the following remarks:

1st. Plato, in his Book de Legibus, says, that it is an excellent lesson to be very cautious and tender, in so much as mentioning the very name of God.

2dly. According to Philo, the seventh day was truly called Eortee pandeemos, the universal or *popular* festival. The Athenians observed it with great strictness, and suffered no servile work to be done upon it.

3dly. By Solon's laws, no one was to dare to strike a parent, or not to provide for him in his old age, except the child

The people of Israel being properly prepared for some stupendous event, the Almighty sent them, by the hand of his servant Moses, his divine commands, declaring first of all, that he was *their* God; that he had just delivered them from the most severe oppression, to lead them into a land of peace and rest; that he was the one all-wise, all-powerful, and eternal being; that they should therefore serve him, and him only; that they should erect no idols or representation of any sensible object, as the invisible God was a being jealous of his honour, who would visit their iniquities upon their latest posterity, but who would reward their obedience and faithfulness with mercy the most extensive that human nature could conceive.

child was illegitimate, or not brought up to some business or profession.

4thly. Murder was made capital; adultery, theft, and false witness, were punished by the Athenians, according to the several laws of Draco and Solon.

Having now declared the nature of that Being whom they were to worship, and the strict manner in which that worship should be directed, he proceeds to impress them still further with the awful idea of his almighty majesty, by charging them to make no light or trifling, no unnecessary or prophane mention of his holy name, but to use it in supplication and in prayer, for that he would by no means hold him *guiltless;* on the contrary, should think him deeply guilty, who took his name in vain.

The next Commandment, by the word *remember*, seems the repetition of some former Commandment, probably delivered to Adam at the creation of the world, as we may judge from these words, Genesis ii. 3: "And God blessed the seventh day, and "sanctified it, because in it he had rested from "all his work." This is repeated in the delivery of this Commannment: "For in six

"days

"days the Lord made Heaven and earth, "the sea, and all that therein is; wherefore "the Lord blessed the seventh day, and hal- "lowed it." A seventh part of man's time was but small to be employed in the public service of the Deity, a small return for his creation and preservation, a small and not a tedious test of his openly professing himself the servant of God, and setting a good example to mankind. The breach of the Sabbath, under the Mosaic institution, was punished with death: such was the strictness of that law, that no fires were to be kindled in the Jewish habitations on the Sabbath-day. At this present time its neglect or contempt brings its punishment along with it; it hurts the morals both of the rich and poor, and calls off their attention from reflection and serious duties; thus it is subversive of the good of society, in weakening those laws, by which the weak or the just are protected

from the injuries of the strong or the unjust. But a due observation of the Sabbath was not enjoined by the Almighty for his own glory and advantage; it brought temporal as well as spiritual benefits along with it; humanity required it: "That thine ox and thine "ass may have rest, and that the son of thine "handmaid (thy slave or bondsman) may "be refreshed. Remember (says the Di-"vine Legislator) that thou wast a servant "in the land of Egypt;" remember the bitterness of slavery, and feel for others by experience. Without this command, without the interference of the laws, both of God and man, towards the enforcement of this excellent institution, many, no doubt, might every where be found, whose pleasures or whose interests would leave them little feeling for the patient animal or the faithful servant.

The Divine Lawgiver having thus enjoined mankind the proportion and manner of homage

mage due to himself, proceeds to furnish them with such injunctions, as should tend most effectually to their quiet and happiness, whether as placed in an individual or social state; and the first and most reasonable duty is that we owe our parents. To be sure, they are but the instruments in the hand of Providence to give us being; but at our first existence how helpless and incapable we are, and how much more room has the human species than the brute, to load its offspring with a weight of obligation; how much more arduous the task to save the mind from ill impressions, which will produce everlasting pain, than to screen the body from the temporary inconveniencies of hunger and of cold. The protection, tenderness, and care, afforded to our helpless infancy, *may* call forth gratitude and love; but the benefits of a right and religious education, *must* command esteem and veneration: and the only way to

discharge so great an obligation, is to extend that virtuous instruction and good example to the rising generation. The Israelites were promised the long enjoyment of temporal possessions, if, next to the great Divine Parent, they honoured and protected the human.

Upon the sixth Commandment depends not only the peace, but the very existence of society: "Thou shalt do no murder." "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall "his blood be shed." This precept is so obvious, and so reasonable, that nothing more need be said upon it, but that a proper attention to the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ, and to that mild benevolence of spirit inculcated in his Gospel, will teach men so effectually to restrain their impetuous and cruel passions, that it will close up every avenue in the human heart, which can give birth to so foul a crime. Well is it worth the

the while of kings, and of statesmen, to consider the fatal consequences of unnecessary ambition, to hearken to the dictates of justice, rather than the dreams of policy, and to reflect, that victory is ever preceded by destruction. Let the hero, pressing forward in the career of conquest, look behind him, and see how desolation follows his footsteps in blood.

The next Commandment comprehends, though in one word, the great duty of chastity (for in this extensive sense must adultery be understood), set forth more fully and explicitly in the law of Christ. Of its opposite vice, it shall suffice to observe at present, that it ought to be restrained both by the laws of God and man, upon principles, not only of religion, but of sound policy; for wherever the children are of uncertain parents, the care both of provision and education is greatly diminished; but upon this provision

and

and education undoubtedly depend both the number and prosperity of mankind.

The eighth Commandment has a near connection with the sixth, for as in the one we are forbidden to take away the life of man, so in the other we are prohibited from violently or clandestinely abstracting his means of life. So well convinced are all civilized states of the necessity of securing all just acquirements and undoubted property, that they have punished the violation with death. There are still, however, many instances which call for the restraint of religious principles, and the doctrine of the law of Christ, without which, ingenious fraud, artful or undetected dishonesty, would shake society to its foundation. It is not only the duty, it is the interest, therefore, of every state, to protect and cherish that religion, which enforces in their greatest purity, the laws of God: human laws can only restrain

crimes

crimes, by punishing the offender *after* they are committed; they destroy the sin, by destroying the sinner; divine laws, reverenced by the state, and promoted by example, can alone prevent their commission. Religious principles, imbibed in early youth, will keep men from the entrance into vice; penal laws can but check its progress by the fear of punishment, or punish sin by death; and as there is more joy over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance, so it is harder, perhaps, to turn one sinner from the habit of iniquity, than to keep ninety and nine just persons in the habits of virtue.

The ninth Commandment has also a near connection with the foregoing; for as we are not, on any account, to take away the property of another, so neither are we to prevent the acquirement, or disturb the possession, of that property, by lessening our neighbour in the

the eye of the world, or injuring his reputation by slander and defamation. Though perjury be the plague that slayeth in the noon day, false calumny is the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and, by destroying the mutual good opinion and confidence of mankind, unties and disunites the bond of society.

The last Commandment teaches the blessings of content, enjoins men to sit down satisfied with their own possessions, neither to covet the superior riches, nor envy the greater good fortune, of others; for this envy and covetousness must lead to theft, to murder, and to the commission of every crime. "Rather "let any one labour (saith St. Paul), that "instead of being in a situation to be worse "than another, he may have to give to him "that needeth."

Such were these Tables, the basis of the Jewish law, replete with sound wisdom

dom and social utility, consonant to right reason, congenial to the nature of man, worthy of the God that gave them, and beneficial they will remain, till such a being as man shall cease to exist.

" Though blest with these high privileges, " the Jews revolted from their deliverer, to " the worship of idols that could not save: " they grew dissatisfied and rebellious under " the ceremonial part of their religion, " which God had instituted, in order to keep " them clear of the idolatries that ruined the " nations around them. Besides this, they " shamefully broke their moral law, regard- " less of its sacred and social obligations." The Mosaical institution was not sufficient for them; its laws were rather negative than positive: this people had arrived at such a pitch, that their religion had lost all the ore of virtue, and nothing scarcely remained but the dross of ceremony; they were exact and

anxious

anxious to pay the tithes of mint, anise, and cummin, but they neglected justice and judgment, the weightier matters of the law; they made long prayers indeed, but they added oppression to the oppressed, they devoured widows houses; they made the word of God of none effect through their own traditions; finally, though they had received the law by the disposition of angels, they had not kept it.

The Pagan world was also sunk in all the absurdities of the grossest superstition and the basest idolatry; the Mosaic law was but the shadow of good things to come; a new dispensation was wanted, a new revelation and a new covenant were made; this was that grace and truth* which came by Jesus Christ.

* As the Mosaic law was full of burdensome ceremonies, it was a *yoke* upon the Jews; it was harsh and full of rigour, however necessary. But as the Gospel abolished those ceremonies, taught the worship of God in spirit and truth, and brought a gratuitous offer of salvation to all, it is justly stiled *grace*, or *a matter of especial* FAVOUR from the Almighty;

Christ. God became Emmanuel, and dwelt with us. Men were taught of God, his laws were put in their hearts, and in their minds were they written. Superstition gave way to faith, and ceremony to religious sincerity; sacrifice was performed by mercy. Rational and polite learning shone together with the light of the Gospel, and Christianity, led on by humble purity on the one hand, and humanity on the other, made her progress through the world. Mankind wondered at their former ignorance, and were shocked at their former absurd credulity; their manners were less ferocious, they performed their duty to God, but they did not forget that one part of it was justice and benevolence to mankind; and civil freedom has been ever the inseparable companion of pure religion. To

Almighty; and as the Mosaic dispensation was but the *shadow* of good things to come, so the Gospel is *truth*, that is, the consummation or completion, ultimate improvement, and perfection of the law.

expatiate

expatiate upon many of those excellent and sacred laws, or moral injunctions, contained in the Gospel, would lead us into too wide a field of disquisition; it shall suffice, therefore, to mention one, as characteristic of Christianity, and justly called a *new* Commandment.

All nations, whether Jews or Gentiles, had early imbibed the maxim of retaliation; an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. This spirit evidently checked the progress of humanity and civilization. An act of the most cruel injustice, dictated by passion, often blind, always excessive, and sometimes mistaken, was returned by another action of more deliberate cruelty, and of almost equal injustice. One of the greatest philosophers,* in his definition of anger, calls it a certain uneasiness of mind, attended, however, with some pleasure, from the prospect of revenge.

* Aristotle.

The

The superior philosophy of Christ teaches, that revenge should give no pleasure to one of his disciples: "Ye have heard, says he, "that it hath been said in old times, thou "shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine "enemy. But I say unto ye, love your "enemies, bless them that curse you, do "good to them that hate you, and pray for "them that despitefully use you and perse-"cute you, that ye may be the children of "your Father which is in Heaven, who, su-"perior to every principle of anger and re-"venge, makes his sun to rise on the evil "and on the good, and sendeth rain, alike "on the just and on the unjust." There is no exhortation which could more effectually tend to make wars cease in all the world, to knap the spear, and break the bow in sunder, and to burn the chariot in the fire, or in few words to associate and harmonize mankind.

SERMON V.

[Preached for the Benefit of the Bath Hospital, 1799.]

MARK XII. 44.

For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.

OUR Saviour having, by a long discourse in the Temple at Jerusalem, rebuked the hypocrisy and infidelity of the Pharisees, and foretold the approaching calamities of the Jewish nation, went and sat himself down opposite the treasury, a place so called, because in it were deposited the voluntary contributions of the worshippers, who came up to the feasts; and the money thrown into it, was employed to buy wood, for the altar, salt, and other necessaries, not provided for in

in any other way. The Jews considered this act as a piece of laudable and becoming piety, as a respect for God and his holy temple; but it became in time, an usual thing; persons who were rich, distributed from pure habit, from ostentation, or inconsiderate profusion; their offerings were the mere effects of vanity and custom. Not such were the motives of this poor widow; they proceeded from a sense of duty and a regard for God and his service; her offering came from the heart, it was not the refuse of abundance, but the sparings of poverty and of self-deprivation. Our Saviour was so well pleased with the uncommon liberality (for he discovered by his divine intuition, both the sum she put in, and her attendant sensations), that he called his Disciples, to be witnesses of her piety; he pointed out to them the superior estimation of her gift, that it is not the extent of our charity, but the motive with which it is given,

that stamps its real value. And here (as in many other cases) let us not misunderstand our blessed Lord, by taking his words in too literal a sense; let us not suppose, that she was in extreme distress, or that this was (to use a vulgar expression) the last farthing she had in the world: What would this have been, but thoughtless prodigality? The text should be thus understood: "For all these "did cast in of their abundance, what to "them was a mere trifle; but she did cast in "all the money she had about her, even all "that remained of that day's subsistence;" for such construction the original language will warrant us in putting upon it.

Benevolence is a quality so natural to, so implanted in, the breast of every good man, so strongly inculcated and recommended to Christians, in every page of the Gospel, that it will be difficult, if not impossible, to use any new persuasives to it, or to throw any

new

new light on this subject: I trust, however, that its high importance, and intrinsic value, will need neither brilliant language, nor studied declamation, to engage your attention and to interest your hearts. I purpose in this discourse, to lay before your view, the motives that men in general have always had, and still have, for the encouragement of public charities, and the strong inducements that must ever particularly actuate Christians, to the performance of this characteristic duty, from the example and the injunction of our blessed Saviour and his Apostles; and, lastly, I shall appeal to your judgment and your feelings, to assist in the support and advancement of the excellent institution now before you. The wisest and most profound statesmen have ever considered the real strength and security of a country, to consist in the number and industry of the grand mass of the people.

Though the lower orders (according to the decrees of Providence) are to remain contented in their subordinate situations, yet every principle of good policy and self-interest (putting humanity and religion out of the question), should induce the higher orders to support and assist them, in sickness and calamity. What master would choose to have a sickly labourer, or a crippled artisan, if he could avoid it? If the poor had to look to their fellows alone, for attendance and assistance, what a sad depression on the spirit of industry would this be? The pursuits of labour, the works of art, must often be at a stand; the national interest must suffer, the the national wealth must diminish, and the burden of useless citizens must ultimately fall on the public. Moreover, some medicines essentially requisite, some medical skill indispensable, may not lay within the reach of the ability of the labourer, or of the artist,

to

to procure; the state might by this means lose such members as the wealth of Ophir can never repurchase, and numbers maintained by their labour, must now be supported by the community. Another motive which should incline mere human wisdom to support these charities is, the very extraordinary manner in which medical science has been advanced by them. How many ingenious men would have been lost to the world, what supereminent talents had been buried in oblivion, how many useful discoveries had remained unknown, without the fostering hand, and the public emulation of an hospital? The variety of diseases which occur in them, the chequered table of misfortune, are here spread both before the experienced and the raw; the bitterest stages of malignity are here softened, and even subdued, by the united efforts of skill and attention. Nor are the poor alone the gainers by such opportunities,

portunities, the rich also, liable to all the calamities that flesh is heir to, reap, at a price comparatively trifling, the immediate harvest of painful experience and gratuitous practice. If such are the obvious advantages of public infirmaries, is it not extraordinary that we see no such provided for the sick among the Greeks and Romans? The Jews, also, were notoriously deficient in these charities; they suffered their maniacs, their paralytics, and their lepers, to infest the gates and lanes of their cities, to expire with disease in their suburbs, to make their beds among the tombs. It was left for Christianity alone to find receptacles for public calamity, and accordingly we read this account of the charity of the primitive Christians: I shall give it you in the very words of an author, who is considered as no friend to Christianity, and I shall likewise mention the conduct of an emperor, an avowed apostate from it: "As long as the

"contributions

"contributions of the Christian people were "free and unconstrained, the abuse of their "confidence could not be very frequent, and "the general uses to which their liberality "was applied, reflected honour on the reli-"gious society. A decent portion was re-"served for the maintenance of the Bishop "and his Clergy, a sufficient sum was al-"lotted for the expences of the public wor-"ship, the whole remainder was the sacred "patrimony of the poor. According to the "discretion of the Bishop, it was distributed "to support widows and orphans, the *lame*, "the sick, and the aged of the community; "to comfort strangers and pilgrims, and to "alleviate the misfortunes of prisoners and "captives; more especially when their suf-"ferings had been occasioned by their firm "attachment to the cause of religion. A "generous intercourse of charity united the "most distant provinces, and the smaller

"congregations

"congregations were chearfully assisted by "the alms of their more opulent brethren. "Such an institution, which paid less re- "gard to the merit, than to the distress of "the object, very materially conduced to "the progress of Christianity. The Pagans, "who were actuated by a sense of humani- "nity, while they derided the doctrines, ac- "knowledged the benevolence of the new "sect. The prospect of immediate relief, "and of future protection, allured into its "hospitable bosom many of those unhappy "persons, whom the neglect of the world "would have abandoned to the miseries of "want, of sickness, and of old age. There "is some reason likewise to believe, that "great numbers of infants, who, according "to the inhuman practice of the times, had "been exposed by their parents, were fre- "quently rescued from death, baptized and "maintained by the piety of the Christians,

"and

"and at the expence of the public trea-
"sure."* The Roman Emperor Julian, expressed himself mortified, that the Christian charity maintained not only their own, but also the heathen poor. He intended to set up schools in every town, and to erect hospitals, where the poor and the sick might be taken care of. The Christians, he said, had maintained themselves, and increased in the midst of persecutions, by such means, as much more proper to work upon the common people, than mere reasoning. He commands Arsatius, Pontiff of Galatia, that he, and the other magistrates of the province, should take care to erect infirmaries, in imitation of the Christians, for the sick and poor, and assigns part of the revenue of each province where such infirmaries should be erected, for their support.

* Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, vol. 2, page 347.

Let

Let us now consider the example and injunctions of our blessed Saviour, and of his Apostles, to the performance of this duty. If the illiterate Pagan, whose mind never soared beyond this life, or whose ideas at all events were but uncertain respecting his future state, but, affected by the common dictates of humanity, deemed it right to encourage such institutions, what should not the Christian feel, who is promised eternal happiness, as the reward of piety and true charity? Every word and action of our Saviour, was designed to promote brotherly love and compassion, his whole life was employed in acts of benevolence and mercy; witness the number of his miraculous cures, recorded by all the Evangelists, too numerous, and highly unnecessary here to enumerate. "Great "multitudes came unto him, having with "them those that were lame, blind, dumb, "maimed, and many others, and cast them "down

"down at Jesus' feet, and he healed them; in-
"somuch that the multitude wondered when
"they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed
"to be whole, and the blind to see; and
"they glorified the God of Israel." His ex-
hortations to pity and charity are many; one
only I shall mention, that where he recom-
mends in so forcible a manner to the notice
of Christians in all ages, the sick, the naked,
the stranger, and the prisoner, and declares
acts of kindness shewn to them, the same as
if done to himself. "Inasmuch (says he)
"as ye have done it unto the least of these,
"my brethren, ye have done it unto me."
The great Apostle to the Gentiles says, "I
"have shewn you all things, how that so la-
"bouring, ye ought to support the weak,
"and to remember the words of the Lord
"Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to
"give, than to receive." In the gifts or fa-
vours which men usually bestow upon each

other

other, such as feeding the hungry, visiting the sick, clothing the naked, defending or delivering the oppressed, it is self-evident that the receiver can enjoy only a temporary benefit or blessing, which of necessity must terminate with this present life; whereas the giver, in reward of his goodness and humanity, will reap the blessing of life eternal. Again, it is no less evident, that in receiving favours which we know and feel ourselves in need of, there cannot be imagined even the lowest virtue; but in freely bestowing such favours, there is virtue in the highest degree. Nature, self-love, self-preservation, urge, and almost compel us to accept kindnesses, whilst religion, charity, and the love of God, are the motives that induce us to confer them.* The peculiar circumstances of the present period,† call aloud for every assistance which the afflu-

* Pyle.

† It was a time of great scarcity.

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ent can afford, with a voice not to be silenced. The imperious cry of necessity must thrill through every ear, and vibrate on every heart; it shall not, and it has not been unheard. That benevolence, which has ever done an honour to our country, shall, I trust, continue to flow with increasing strength and rapidity: our face shall never be turned away from any poor man, nor our compassion be shut up from providing for the sick and needy.

Lastly, let me submit to your judgment and your feelings, the propriety of supporting the excellent institution now before us. Founded by some of the most benevolent men that ever existed, not on the narrow principles of provincial, or local utility, but on the broad basis of extensive and universal charity, how has it answered its design? In forty-seven years, it has restored to health and to their friends, nearly forty-seven hun-

dred persons, completely cured, besides upwards of eight thousand considerably benefitted; need any thing more be said in its recommendation? As this charity is particularly intended to relieve the *poor* stranger, let the *rich* stranger, when he feels in his veins the current of returning health, reflect at how small a price he may extend the same blessing to his poorer brother; give the lame a crutch, tinge the palid cheek with the glow of convalesence, relume the fading lamp of life that trembles in its socket; to the child return its parent, to the parent restore his child. Surely such noble purposes as these may not only claim a trifle from the pursuits of pleasure, or the heap of accumulation, but even wring a pittance from the hard hand of labour, a mite from the savings of industry. But it is not merely to awaken a momentary benevolence, that I say thus much; for the blaze of munificence, I would substitute

stitute the steady light of continued bounty; I would contract the rich flood of present generosity, into the lasting stream of future support. But whilst we thus solicit the feeble aid of man, to the relief of his drooping brother, let us not forget our humble and grateful adorations of that Almighty Being, whose gracious Providence confers upon us this salutary spring. When we bow to taste it, let us implore his mercy, and acknowledge the benefits he has conferred upon us; when we are anxious to wash away the impurities of our bodies, let us wash our hearts with *pure* water, and sprinkle our minds from an evil conscience. Finally, let us entreat of the Saviour of the world, to give us evermore that living water of his blessed word, of which if a man drink, he shall thirst no more. Upon this, as upon all other occasions, however, let us remember, that it is the motive which ever constitutes the merit

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of the action; let us be ready at all times to do good from a good principle. As our Saviour recommends, "Call together the poor, "the disabled, the lame, and the blind, and "thou shalt be blest, for they cannot recom- "pense thee, but thou shalt be recompensed "at the resurrection of the Just."

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